

The Believer's Repose- Rev Calum Macdonald (Retired)

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[0 : 00] We can turn to the passage that we read in the Old Testament Scriptures.! The book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 40.

Reading again at the end of the chapter, we can read from verse 28. Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might. He increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary. And young men shall fall exhausted.

But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

[1 : 01] Particularly the last verse there. But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. I'm sure these verses are familiar to some of you.

The prophecy of Isaiah is perhaps of all the prophets in the Old Testament. People find it the most readable.

And it's not surprising because it is readable that many compare it to the Gospels.

But the comparison is not just because of readability or ease of understanding. But because of the content.

[2 : 04] What it often speaks about. Much more perhaps than any other passage in the Old Testament. You find that reference is made to the Savior.

The passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there are many passages here which can only be identified as speaking about him directly.

Or alluding to him in his work and in his ministry. The chapter we're looking at is probably one of these chapters that remind us of the wonder of God's providence.

And his purpose is within providence. Not only are we reminded of the creative power that he possesses. That enables him to speak of himself as one that surpasses every other deity that they are familiar with.

And remember in the days of the prophet. There were nations surrounding them. And they possessed gods in abundance.

[3 : 31] Many, many false idols were worshipped and served and feared. And towards the end of this book.

We find the focus of the prophet more and more coming to dwell upon the need that there is for salvation.

And pointing to God as the provider of that salvation. The God who is going to be the Savior of his people.

And in this chapter in particular. There are various things that are brought to mind. But basically what we are reminded of is that the salvation that is needed is provided by God.

Who is to rescue his people out of the worst of their predicaments. The God who is going to supply that rescue is a God who has no rival.

[4 : 49] They cannot look and they should not look and they dare not look to any other God to provide for them. The salvation that they need. Because as you have read.

There is no God like him. There is no God who possesses power like he possesses power and executes it. Exercises it.

And finally in this chapter he is brought to our attention as the God of hope. The hope of the believer.

And if you put... First of all if you remind yourself these words were spoken, were prophesied to. They were words that were brought to the attention of a people who had lost sight of who their God was.

[5 : 48] They were so overtaken by the events of their own day. And these events were the focus of their attention. Their eyes seldom gravitated to God.

They seldom looked to the creation that spoke to them of that God. And reminded them of that God. They forgot who their God was.

With drastic results. And that is the same in every generation. It's the same for our own generation. When the people of God, the church of God, those who profess to serve God, are so overtaken by the events of the present that they've forgotten that there is a God who is God over all and who is sovereign in the events of the day, just as he was sovereign in the events of every generation that has passed.

And that nothing occurs, nothing takes place, nothing happens, that he has not the last word concerning.

[7 : 11] That's not an easy truth to remember. But it's one that we have to remember. And every one of us will find ourselves embroiled in events or situations or providences, however you want to describe it.

And we are so traumatized, so distressed, so affected by these things that God is not one that we are aware of.

We should find him. We should look for him. We should hear him. We should be able to see him in these things. And be attentive to what he has to say too.

But often, too often, we are oblivious to the truth that he is doing what he does at all times with the best of motives and the best of purposes for his own glory and for our good.

There are many descriptions in the Bible of God, who God is and what God does.

[8 : 38] There are many descriptions of who God's people are and what they do. And very often when we come across these descriptions, it's a clear indication to us that we should listen to what we are being told about God or about ourselves if we are believers to help us understand what is true about us or what should be true about us.

What is true about God always and what should be true about his people in order to learn from that discovery that we are making.

And sometimes it is a rediscovery. And I want us to look at the verse that's before us here which reminds us how a believer, how someone who trusts in God is portrayed, what is true about them. And secondly, what we are encouraged to believe is true about them. The prophet portrays to us a believer in a particular way and then what needs to be true about the believer who is portrayed in that way.

Some of you at least are familiar with the writings of the late Reverend Murdoch Campbell.

[10 : 14] He died a long time ago, a good number of years ago. But thankfully he was somebody who left a lot of his thoughts, who committed them to print.

And we have snippets of his thinking in diaries that were left and republished and published and republished and some books that bore his name during his own lifetime.

One of the books is called In All Their Afflictions. And as you can imagine, it is a book that speaks to Christians in particular.

And if you remind yourself of the time at which these words were written, he was somebody who was who was living at the time of the Second World War and he lived for a time in Glasgow and he experienced the effect of German bombardment.

And there are many distressing experiences that he had in his life as a result of that. But also in his own lifetime, he suffered because of bereavements within the family.

[11 : 54] He suffered because of mental and spiritual exhaustion because of the work that he did. But he describes in this book the secret of inner peace.

And I'm sure there are many people today and I know that there are. If you want to go to a bookshop, not necessarily a Christian bookshop, you will find many writers and so-called experts

who are willing to tell you the secret to inner peace.

The way that you find it and the way that you keep it. But Woodrow Campbell was writing from a Christian perspective and what he said was true perhaps for many in his own generation and I'm sure it's true for many Christians today.

that he attributed the peace, the internal peace of the believer. We're going to speak about it this evening as well, the peace that is beyond understanding.

But this in passing he was speaking about it as something that he attributed to the willingness of a believer to to take from the Father's hand willingly and with a spirit of acceptance whatever it was that God supplied them with.

[13 : 44] and he said he spoke this not just occasionally not just when the worst nightmare occurs or the worst case scenario becomes your experience but every day you take whatever it is that God has put in your cup with a willingness to receive it understanding and believing that whatever it is you will not get less and you will not get more than is necessary for the moment and that it will result in God's glory for you to be aware of it and it will result in the good that God means you to come into possession of.

and the problem of Israel the problem of Judah that the prophet ministered to was that they looked at their circumstances they looked at their providence and it was in their mind distorted because they could not see why these things should be as they were they could not see God even in the events that they were grappling with day in day out and that's no new thing it's not something that passed away with Israel of old or Judah of old go back to the book of Genesis and you'll find how Jacob when he was confronted with the news that his son

Joseph had been devoured by wild animals and was it Benjamin taken from them he concluded again and again that everything was against him God was against him and he was bitter and he was so affected by it and this can happen it can happen to individuals it can happen to a corporate body you think that a congregation of God's people are immune from having a false vision of all that God is doing and interpreting it with a false perception it is more than obvious that very often it is the case that that spirit can permeate the atmosphere not just of a life a heart a mind but also permeate the atmosphere of families of the family of God and it is something that we need to be aware of but the prophet is speaking into that that's the message that he has to convey is to a people who have lost sight of God when they have arrived at conclusions that are false with notions that are not governed by the understanding that God is in control that he is a

God who can control events at a microscopic level just as surely as he can control events at a world level or even beyond that remember the prophet in this book has already spoken about God in this way in chapter 8 we find him there speaking the same truth concerning God's people behold I and the children whom the Lord has given me words you find quoted in the New Testament in the epistle to the Hebrews behold I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts who dwells in around Mount Zion and when they say to you inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter should not a people inquire of their

God should they not inquire of the dead on behalf of the living and so on I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob and I will hope in him the prophet says chapter 25 same prophet the same truth is brought to the attention of the people again it will be said on that day behold this is our God we have waited for him that he might save us this is the Lord we have waited for him let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation so the people of God are reminded that whatever it is that concerns them that they are taken over by that they are to wait for the Lord in these circumstances and when we think of what the prophet finishes of this chapter with we might we think to ourselves they who wait for the

[20 : 06] Lord shall renew their strength that the waiting that is spoken of here is a waiting of of inactivity a waiting of immobility a waiting of of just folding your hands and perhaps you're saying as you are a congregation like many others just now you are waiting for the Lord to provide you with the minister that you crave that you're waiting for the Lord to change the situation of the congregation so that you will be as one united and your mind settled on somebody who will come and pastor you and if you were asked the question what does your waiting consist of well you're just waiting you're just looking for

God to do something we're just looking for the elders to come up with somebody we're just looking for something to happen that will change our situation and that's just an example it's not the main

thing that I wanted to bring to your attention but it is certainly something where you often hear people talking about waiting for the Lord and they're waiting if it is examined they're waiting if it is truly looked at to find what it is what it consists of then it's not really consistent with the waiting that is suggested to us here sometimes we have to wait for a turn in queue sometimes we have to wait for appointments to appear that we've been long waiting for we live in a generation that knows much about that how many doctor's appointments how many surgical appointments and so on we wait these things are out of our hands but the waiting of which the apostle the prophet speaks here professor John Mackay puts it into words better than I can this is no idle passing of the time it is hope directed to a target as they live with an expectation that is focused on God and confident that he will make the difficulties that beset them that he will resolve them now if we're waiting for the Lord in that way surely we lay hold of the promises of God it is a most energetic and productive activity I was thinking of it like this we lay hold you are told lay hold of the promises of God and have you ever tried to lay hold of the promises of God it's not something you do in the recliner you embrace Christ in the promises have you tried to embrace someone with your hands in your pocket it's not possible a physical impossibility and yet some people think that when they embrace Christ in his promises promises that pertain to the outworking of his purposes at the level of a congregation for example to return to it we think that these things can be done idly that these things can be done without being exercised without being in any way stimulated to activity the Old Testament saints just as surely as the New Testament saints are portrayed again and again as those who have a firm and unshakable hope that God is true to his word and that's the picture we have of God's people here a picture that tells us that they they waiting on the Lord is the waiting of those who have trusted that the God upon whom they wait is faithful to his word but notice the time is passing so I want to bring to your attention this that how the

artist what is true of them is described very graphically we are told about them that they shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint maybe if we if we look at these things minutely and separate out from one another we lose sight of the picture that's been conveyed but to begin with their strength is renewed that again is a reminder to us of their predicament you can't renew something that's not been there before you can't renew something in other words it's the same with when we think of revival we talk of revival of religion and our attention is directed towards the unconverted and we're waiting for God to work amongst the unconverted how can God revive the unconverted when they were dead and are dead in trespasses and sin it's not a revival as far as they're concerned it's a quickening a new life they're born again but he can revive his people he can bring to life what has fallen into the slumber of spiritual sleep and like that the renewal of strength is a renewal of strength that they have been deprived of that they have lost unbelief has weakened them the eye of faith has grown dim they've lost sight of where their strength is to be found you know the name of John Owen he speaks of it as spiritual strength in particular and he directs attention to the words of Peter in the second epistle his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence God is the one who has empowered his people he is the one who has given spiritual strength to his people to go on Paul in Ephesians 3 says this that according to his riches of his glory he may grant to you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being again it's God's strength that needs to be brought to our attention not me made stronger not me pumping iron as it were but reminded where our strength is to be found reminded of where the source of our divine energy is to be applied to strength that exists by reason of God's grace to begin with strength that continues to be our provision for living life of faith in this world that you are encouraged to to to plug into if you want our spiritual life is brought into being through

[29 : 13] God and it is maintained by God the same grace with which we began is the same grace with which we continue the same grace and power and strength spiritual with which we will finish the race I'll give you a quote from a man called John Brown of Haddington he was talking about Ruth in the Old Testament and Naomi and Naomi's daughter-in-law Orpah and this is what he said concerning them it is not in fleeing from God's mighty hand but in humbling ourselves under it that safety lies it is not in out running crosses but in taking them up and following Christ that through comfort is to be found let us therefore keep waiting for the

Lord in the way of his judgments in patient possessing of our souls eyeing the Lord's hand in all that we meet with humbling ourselves under humbling providence mourning but never murmuring under

God's hand and that's not easy to do it is right for us to mourn the spiritual death of our lives but it is completely wrong for us to murmur against God if that is how things are we often hear about the current state of affairs within our churches as if it is in some way God's doing that this is our Lord instead of beginning at home beginning with our own lives beginning with our own hearts those who what do they do wait on the

Lord shall be used in they shall mount up with wings like eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint! it's just a picture if you like in brief of the end result of putting your trust in God's provisions the power that is available to the believer is a power that equips them strengthens them enables them to go on and to persevere and to live life to the full for the glory of their God for the good of their soul the late John MacCever who was in Carloway in a sermon said the following and he was dealing with the weariness that often assails the believer in a world that they have to meet all kinds of trials and testings but he wanted us to be reminded of this you will never be weary of being weary of sin

I think that's a wonderful obvious statement that is true of the believer you will never be weary of being weary of sin you will never be weary of deciding to be like Christ you will never be weary of loving Christ you will be like Christ and not be weary throughout all eternity isn't that something to desire for yourself child of God I think this is what you want to be someone who is strengthened from on high knowing that that strength is God provided God supplied to enable you to rationalize all that is ongoing in your own personal life in the life of those around about you always seek God's hand in that always seek God's purposes in that always seek what good can come of this in my life what results you will rise up with wings like an eagle you go above whoever is an ornithologist will tell you that when an eagle rises it uses the power of its muscles in its wings to get up powerful wing muscles but then when it gets up into the higher echelons where there are drafts and where there is all kinds of flows of air all he does is in his height he's able to glide as it were with limitless energy and with absolutely hardly anything of that of his own innate power in exercise our

[35 : 10] God is a great God and he wants his people to enjoy great things at his hand let us pray Lord help us to remind ourselves that the renewal of spiritual strength is possible because you supply it let us submit to your will for us in all things and learn to live life in that light I pray for those who have yet to submit to your hand open their eyes to see their own puniness their own frailty their own lack of of real purpose if God is not the one they look to please and to enjoy watch over us each one forgives sin in Jesus name Amen our closing psalm is psalm 92 psalm 92 we're singing again from the

Scottish Psalter and we're singing verse 12 to the end but like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one he shall like to the cedar grow that is in Lebanon those that within the house of God are planted by his grace they shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place and so on these verses but like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one but like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one he shall!

the! the sea! the the sea in Lebanon those that within the hearts of God God are are planted by his glace they shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place!

the days day the the the fruit for shall bring!

shall they shall be fat and full of sap and he be flourishing to show that abight is the Lord he is amok to me and he all the night shall and he from all the night righteousness is all together free now may grace from God the

[39 : 21] Father the Son and Amen