

God *Is* Fair  
Isaiah 40:27-31

October 16, 2010

A. Introduction

- 1. not an easy time to be in a foreign land
- 2. not an easy time to live in a 'foreign' world<sup>A</sup>

B. The Complaint of God's People ..... 40:27

- 1. Jacob; Israel
- 2. God Isn't Fair to Me!
  - a. their complaints
  - b. their conclusions about God

C. Look at Our God!

- 1. Who He Is ..... 40:28
  - a. God *Is* Fair
  - b. God is eternal<sup>B</sup>
  - c. God is LORD<sup>C</sup>
  - d. God is Creator of the ends of the earth<sup>D</sup>

2. What He Does ..... 40:29

- a. man's weary and weak nature
- b. God's giving nature<sup>E</sup>

D. Make an Exchange

1. From the Natural ..... 40:30

- a. even the young
- b. even the choicest young

2. To the Spiritual ..... 40:31

- a. the last part: **mount, ... run, ... walk**
- b. the middle part: **will gain new strength**
- c. the first part: **wait<sup>F</sup>**

E. Conclusion ...

<sup>A</sup> Luke 21:25-26, John 16:33

<sup>B</sup> 2 Timothy 2:13

<sup>C</sup> Hebrews 13:5 (Isaiah 41:17), Matthew 28:20

<sup>D</sup> Romans 11:33

<sup>E</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9

<sup>F</sup> Lamentations 3:25, Psalm 37:34, 27:14

A. Introduction

1. the words we read in these chapters of Isaiah
  - a. from which today's text and Scripture reading are taken
  - b. are primarily written for the future people of God
  - c. people living many years after Isaiah had gone to his rest
  - d. people who were living in a foreign land, with a foreign speech, with foreign culture, and with foreign gods
  - e. a people who felt they had been abandoned, forgotten and completely out of touch with their God and Deliverer
  - f. these words are also written for us
  
2. the church of Jesus Christ constitute the people of God
  - a. we live in a foreign world, with a speech foreign to our hearts, a culture foreign to our minds, and foreign gods
  - b. living in such a land, it is not strange that we, too, should feel abandoned, forgotten and out of touch with our God and Deliverer
  - c. Oh! it's easy enough on a Sunday morning
    - (A) with the singing of the hymns of praise
    - (B) with the fellowship of other believers
    - (C) and, hopefully, on hearing the teaching of God's word
    - (D) to be joyful, to be encourage, and to be uplifted
  - d. but, come Monday morning and through the week
    - (A) as we go back to racing with the other rats
    - (B) that feeling can diminish and our outlook less positive
  
3. it wasn't an easy time for the children of Israel in Babylon
  - a. it isn't an easy time for us in our Babylon
  - b. and the times do not make it any easier

- c. every day the return of the Lord Jesus Christ draws nearer
- d. and that time He Himself describes
- e. in Luke 21:25-26: 25 There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
- f. as the media broadcast into our homes the news of disaster upon disaster; as we see the plunge of society into evil, do not those words, 'men's hearts failing them for fear' (AV) describe our situation so well?
- g. so what has God to say
  - (A) to those people of God in their foreign land
  - (B) and to us, the people of God, in our foreign world?

B. The Complaint of God's People – Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God'? . . . . . 40:27

1. God's People are addressed by two names
  - a. first by the name Jacob, the supplanter, the one grasping his brother's heel at birth and thereafter always scheming and conniving to gain the upper hand on others
  - b. then by the name Israel, the name given to Jacob after he had wrestled all night with God
  - c. some see in this the old and the new nature of God's people
  - d. others see a reference to God's people according to the flesh and to God's people according to the Spirit: to both the physical nation of Israel, and the spiritual Israel of God
  - e. whatever the case, one important thing is that these words are addressed to people of the whole exiled house of Israel, to both the northern and southern tribes being punished because of their centuries of idolatry and disobeying God
  - f. for within those people there was to be remnant who still thought of God, if even in these complaining tones:
  
2. God Isn't Fair to Me!
  - a. that is the fundamental statement that God is hearing from His people Israel

b. **My way is hidden**

- (A) I am walking a difficult and thorny path
- (B) it is physically difficult – serving the Babylonians
- (C) it is spiritually difficult for those who are God's people
- (D) I am surrounded by godless men and women
  - (1) who oppress me with the words and actions
  - (2) who ridicule the God and Christ I serve
- (E) yet, there seems to be cloud over it so that God in His heaven cannot see what is happening: God's not fair

c. **the justice due me escapes the notice of my God**

- (A) every so often we will read of some case in the courts which because of some error made in the records, or the loss of some pertinent testimony or evidence, is set aside. When that happens, usually it means that someone in debt, gets off scot free; and the rights of someone innocent are not vindicated, are passed over
- (B) that is what is being expressed here; Israel says, my case as it came up for judgement has been passed over
- (C) God isn't being fair!

d. when they made these statements

- (A) statements questioning the fairness of God in his treatment of His own people
- (B) statements which we, too, can so easily make in those moments when we are overwhelmed by life

e. they were making, in effect, three statements about God

- (A) 1. He does not care – God is so far away and above us mortals; He has no interest in what happens to us – yes, He sent a Deliverer to us in the past, but that was the past, and now is now
- (B) 2. He is not able – the situation is so impossible, things are so bad in this world, that it's beyond help; it's even beyond God's help, beyond His control
- (C) 3. He is not willing – here I am suffering, and God doesn't intend to pay any attention to what's happening, to do anything about it

3. why do we fall prey to Satan's temptations to think this way? ... it is because

- a. we fail to take into account His power and resources

- b. we think of God in terms of our own weakness
- c. we cannot grasp God's way of wisdom
- d. so, we need to

C. Look at Our God!

1. Who He Is – [Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.](#) . . . . . 40:28

a. God Is Fair

(A) the very fact that God's people are addressed by the terms of Jacob and Israel is a reminder that God was faithful to His promise

- (1) yes, even to the subtle, conniving Jacob
- (2) to the one who was to be Israel, a prince with God
- (3) a man who because of his foolish and selfish action needed to flee his own country to Mesopotamia – the same region where God's people were living
- (4) yet brought back by God's command to the land of his birth – to Canaan
- (5) that same promise-keeping God
  - (a) will deliver these exiles back to Canaan, and,
  - (b) will come to take us to our Canaan land

(B) and He can do this because of who He is

b. He is [the Everlasting, the Eternal God](#)

(A) being eternal, means that the actions and happenings in time have no effect upon Him and His purposes

(B) He, as it were, stands outside of time

(C) and so, all that takes place in this world

- (1) that includes the rage of men against God
- (2) and it includes our own failures in following God
- (3) has absolutely no effect upon his eternal and unchanging purposes
- (4) and even in the midst of our complaining, [If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.](#) (2 Timothy 2: 13)

c. He is '[the Lord](#), the covenant God of His people

- (A) the name Lord, in capitals, is the sacred name of God
  - (B) how it is pronounced, we do not know – at one time it was pronounced Jehovah; now it is thought to be closer to Jahve or Yahweh
  - (C) the God who made Himself known to Moses, and then to His people as Deliverer from the bondage of Egypt
  - (D) and He is the self-same God who entered the world as the man, Jesus Christ, Deliverer from sin's bondage
  - (E) who promises with these words, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 41:17) 'and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:20)
- d. He is 'the Creator of the ends of the earth'
- (A) that is a name of power and of involvement
    - (1) His power is not like ours: it is never diminished by weakness, nor by use
    - (2) we cannot begin to understand His thoughts in the use and application of that power as He wills
    - (3) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (Romans 11:33)
  - (B) His title here is unique
    - (1) not simply Creator – that alone speaks of power
    - (2) but 'of the ends of the earth'
    - (3) covering the extremities, the bounds of the earth and every thing that falls within them
    - (4) the unbounded nature of His power is shown by the fact that it is He who sets any bounds
    - (5) the involved nature of His power – His interest in the affairs of men, is seen in the details of creation
  - (C) and all Babylon,
    - (1) the world of the now exiled Israel, people of God
    - (2) that godless land is under His watchful eye
  - (D) and so is your world
    - (1) the world of the office where you may be the only one that names the name of Christ
    - (2) or the factory, or the school, or the store – God has His eye upon it to watch over you
- e. God Is Fair!
- (A) God is willing!

- (B) God is able!
- (C) God does care!

2. What He Does – He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. 40:29

a. are there any words here that I need to explain

(A) no; these words, on the one hand, describe the lot common to every man, woman, child

(B) we all know what it is to experience weariness

(1) weariness of body with work, frailty and illness

(2) weariness of mind on puzzling out problems

(3) weariness of spirit with the cares of life

(C) as we also have experienced a lack of might

(1) when the spirit is willing but the body is weak

(2) when we just cannot seem to cope

b. Israel in exile knew these experiences

c. the church in the world experiences these, too

d. but our God is a giving, generous, abounding Lord

(A) in the words of Annie Johnson Flint<sup>{2}</sup>.

His love has no limits,

His grace has no measure,

His power no boundary

known unto men;

For out of His infinite riches in Jesus

He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

(B) as shown by that word 'increases' which conveys that he takes that which little, and small, and useless, and transforms it into that which is large, and great and useful, even as Jesus Christ said to Paul, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Corinthians 12:9, AV)

e. so God's people, in their weakness, and with their fainting hearts, are encouraged to

D. Make an Exchange

1. From the Natural – Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, 40:30

- a. this is the general description of mankind
  - b. two groups are singled out here
    - (A) in both cases they come from young people
    - (B) the first group are those possessed of youth
    - (C) the second group is the choicest, most vigorous from among them: those suitable as soldiers, as athletes
  - c. even these, the most capable and energetic of mankind,
    - (A) experience weariness or faintness as their resources fail to be replenished – and vitamins don't seem to help
    - (B) experience tiredness as their labour finds no rest
  - d. and from this natural state, God tells us to turn
2. To the Spiritual – *Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. . . . . 40:31*
- a. our thoughts usually gravitate to the last part of this verse, '*mount, ... run, ... walk*', which can be viewed either
    - (A) as a progression from an exhilarating mountaintop experience through the more demanding daily grind
    - (B) or as the differing situations we face in life which in their turn call for different infusions of divine strength
    - (C) certainly, compared to walking or running, the eagle experience sounds more attractive: when you see a duck flying it's all work – flap, flap, flap – but an eagle or turkey vulture it's all ease – float, float, float
  - b. but what is important is how this experience comes about
    - (A) for that we return to the middle of the verse
      - (1) '*will gain new strength*' – '*will renew their strength*'
      - (2) that word '*gain*' or '*renew*' has the idea to change one thing for another; to exchange
      - (3) and the exchange we are called upon to make is our own fainting, weary strength for God's eternal, enduring strength
    - (B) which brings us back to the most important part of the verse: what is needed to make that



exchange

c. **wait for the Lord** or '**wait on the Lord**'

- (A) this is not a one time, \_\_\_\_\_ event
- (B) but instead, an extended, ongoing activity
- (C) when this verse was translated into Greek, they used a word that means to remain or abide with another, and even includes the thought of patient submission to God
- (D) let us conclude by noting what this waiting involves
  - (1) seeking God: '**The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.**' (Lam. 3:25)
  - (2) obedience to God's revealed will: '**Wait for the Lord and keep His way,**' Ps 37:34
  - (3) acceptance of His strength and encouragement: '**Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.**' (Psalms 27:14)

d. the groom at the front of the church is nervously waiting for the bride – until the familiar music strikes up and he turns to set his eyes and heart upon his bride to be, and joy takes the place of any weakness – so waiting upon the Lord involves that turning to set our eyes and hearts upon Him that displaces every weakness of spirit

E. Conclusion – John Neale translated the words of this Greek hymn

**Art thou weary, art thou languid,  
Art thou sore distrest?  
'Come to Me,' saith One, 'and coming,  
Be at rest.'**<sup>{3}</sup>

1. God *Is* Fair – He does care, He will deal with our situation

2. faintness are weariness are the common lot of human life

- a. yet Christ's invitation is that we should find strength as we are yoked together with him, and rest for our souls<sup>{4}</sup>.
- b. if you have never accepted that invitation, do it now
- c. Christian, do not let the busy-ness of life come between you and waiting on your Lord; on seeking and trusting him

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. *He Giveth More Grace*, by Annie Johnson Flint (1866-1932), © 1941, renewed 1969 by Lillenas Publishing Co.
3. Eighth century Greek hymn translated by John Mason Neale (1818-1866)
4. Matthew 11:28-30