

# WORDS OF COMFORT

**JULY 26, 2020 | DAVID SCHALLER | FAMILY NOTES**

**An Invitation to Hope  
Isaiah 40:27-31**

**1. What aspect of the covid restrictions makes you feel the most trapped and discouraged? What makes you lose hope in anything returning to normal?**

Possible answers: For some it is not being at school with friends, for others it seeing what the isolation is doing to family and friends, maybe it is thinking the whole thing is overblown or that it is making all my fears and anxieties even worse. There are a hundred answers here. For a lighthearted depiction of gloom, despair and agony, see this clip from a 70s variety show called "Hee Haw" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAAKPJEq1Ew>

Our "trapped" feelings because of our covid restrictions are not unlike what the nation of Judah probably experienced in exile in Babylon. Their hope and their future were thwarted, stifled and taken away.

Helpful background to Isaiah 40:27-31: Isaiah ministered and wrote to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. The first portion of the book (Ch 1-39) is filled mainly with messages of God's judgment regarding Israel's idolatry and rebellion in hopes they might repent and turn back to God. While the main focus of chapters 1-39 is judgment, chapters 40-66 emphasize restoration and deliverance. The reason for God's message of His renewing hope and comfort, starting in Chapter 40, is that when His discipline for His people's defiance has done its good work (as a parent disciplines his/her children) God comes back with overflowing comfort.

Up to this point, the people of Judah were teetering on the edge of despair. As you can imagine, the exile caused them to lose faith in their God. They thought, "Maybe He isn't that powerful! Maybe the gods of Babylon are way more powerful than Yahweh!"

Read God's question of his despairing people in Isaiah 40:27, "Why do you say, Jacob, Why do you say, Israel, "The LORD is not aware of what is happening to me; My God is not concerned with my vindication"?"

**2. We know from other places in the Bible that nothing escapes God's notice (Ps 139), so why might the people of Judah feel this way? Why might we feel this way in our covid "exile?"**

Possible answer. There seemed to be no relenting of the exile, not even a hint of being able to return home for decades. It was clear they felt totally abandoned by God. It was like they had fallen off the edge of the earth – we might feel the same way. Also, in our case, we might feel the lockdown isn't completely necessary and are unfairly being restricted. It might seem like our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling.

**3. Pastor Schaller said, "Everything that matters in life hangs on who God is." Read Isaiah 40:28. Without looking, can you name the four characteristics that Isaiah mentions in verse 28? Which attribute means the most to you about who God is? Why?**

- a. The LORD is an eternal, everlasting God – He is not confined by time, He is always out ahead of us and working out his purpose in His own way, at His own pace without our hurried, nervous desperation.
- b. He is the Creator of the whole earth – there is not a square inch of this earth unknown to God or lying beyond the range of his presence.
- c. He does not get tired or weary – He is always at work. He is always fresh, always alert, always able.
- d. There is no limit to his wisdom – we can't figure God out! There are depths to God's wisdom that we can't access. Life is often bewildering to us, but it isn't bewildering to God.

**4. Why is remembering who God is so vital when we are in despair?**

Possible answer. Many times we are overcome with our feelings and we have a hard time thinking clearly when we are wrapped up in despair and discouragement. Recently, as I was putting in many hours getting ready for each Sunday when we started having outdoor services, I was pushing and pushing myself and forgetting to take a day off and it was like I couldn't help myself. It wasn't until my boss practically ordered me to go home that I realized I had forgotten how important a Sabbath rest really is to my health! We need help outside ourselves remembering God's character when we are despairing.

**5. Read Isaiah 40:29-31. Why is it so hard to wait? Share your stories of a time you painfully had to wait for something. Why is it hard to wait for the Lord?**

**"To wait for the Lord"** means to live with the tension of promises revealed but not yet fulfilled. It is waiting on tip-toe, waiting with eager, expectant, confident longing. Waiting is what faith does before God's answer shows up.

**"To renew"** has the idea of to alter and then to revive, to cause to flourish again, to restore that which was decayed, to exchange (our inadequate strength for God's abundant strength).

Pastor Schaller gave this summary for verses 29-31: When you and I trust God (allowing Him to decide the terms) He promises to exchange our weak faith for his supernatural strength.

**Application: Where are you feeling faint and weary? Where do you have an abundance of weakness? Have each one share one area where God's desire is clear and you have been praying but your faith/trust seems to run out regularly.**

Take time to pray for one another asking that God would exchange your weakness in this area for his supernatural strength.

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**2020 BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Father, pour out your Spirit on us and move us forward together.

Father, please retire the Worship Center mortgage by 2025.

Father, please use us to build a reproducing church among an unreached people by 2030.