

## CHAPTER 40

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, besides the general title (as 2:1; 7:3; 13:1); but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burdens, many woes; this consists of many blessings. There the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that is here spoken of as a thing past (52:4); and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious, light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears by the rivers of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more; and, as if it were designed for a prophetic summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness” (40:3), and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, “The new heavens and the new earth,” (66:22). Even Mr. White acknowledges that, as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Saviour for man's redemption, so they are by the Spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come; for if Jesus be he, and his kingdom be it, that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

## ~~200~~ ISAIAH 40:1-2

### EVANGELICAL PREDICTIONS

We have here the commission and instructions given, not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the Lord's prophets, nay, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people.

**1.** This did not only warrant, but enjoin, this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties ripening apace for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, notwithstanding all this, God had mercy in store for them.

**2.** It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time.

**3.** Gospel ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as comforters, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here we have,

**I.** Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, v. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, ~~216~~ Revelation 22:6) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, *Comfort you, comfort you* not because the prophets are unwilling to do it (no, it is the most pleasant part of their work), but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here,

**1.** There are a people in the world that are God's people.

**2.** It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times.

**3.** It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people.

4. Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that has torn will heal us.

II. Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular: “*Speak to the heart of Jerusalem* (v. 2); speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her and to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but *cry unto her*: cry aloud, to show saints their comforts as well as to show sinners their transgressions; make her hear it:”

1. “That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished: *Her warfare is accomplished*, the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment.” Human life is a warfare (<sup>810</sup>Job 7:1); the Christian life much more. But the struggle will not last always; the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay.

2. “That the cause of her trouble is removed, and, when that is taken away, the effect will cease. Tell her that *her iniquity is pardoned*, God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him.” Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*. Troubles are *then* removed in love when sin is pardoned.

3. “That the end of her trouble is answered: *She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins*, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to separate between her and her idols,” the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon: and it had that effect upon them; it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or it may be taken as the language of the divine compassion: *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel* (<sup>0706</sup>Judges 10:16), and, like a tender father, *since he spoke against them he earnestly remembered them* (<sup>260</sup>Jeremiah 31:20), and was ready to say that he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God has *punished them less than their iniquities deserved*; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an

infinite value that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; *for God spared not his own Son.*

## ISAIAH 40:3-8

### EVANGELICAL PREDICTIONS

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, having come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to both these, we have here *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, which *may* be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us if we find God's grace preparing us for it, <sup><3017></sup>Psalm 10:17. But it *must* be applied to John the Baptist; for, though God was the speaker, he was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, and his business was to *prepare the way of the Lord*, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. The way of the Lord is prepared,

**I.** By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem (<sup><4018></sup>Matthew 3:2, 5), and thereby *made ready a people prepared for the Lord*, <sup><4117></sup>Luke 1:17.

**1.** The alarm is given; let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, v. 35. If we apply it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise that, whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (divine power going along with it) sets pioneers on work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the same duty that we are called to, in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls.

**(1.)** We must get into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and his gospel: "*Prepare you the way of the Lord; prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance. Make room for Christ: Make straight a*

*highway for him.*” If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the Saviour; *lift up your heads, O you gates!* <sup><4217></sup>Psalm 24:7, 9. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other minor deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find, or make, a highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious.

(2.) We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are untractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance. This prepares the way of the Lord; and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose hearts he opens as he did Lydia's.

2. When this is done *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*, v. 5.

(1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance Cyrus shall proclaim it, and those shall have the benefit of it, and those only, whose hearts the Lord shall stir up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places.

(2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord (<sup><4117></sup>Luke 1:17), then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not, and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be *a light to lighten the Gentiles. All flesh shall see it together*, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbouring nations, <sup><400></sup>Psalm 126:2. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God,

not one *iota* or tittle of which shall fall to the ground: *The mouth of the Lord has spoken it*, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

**II.** By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature. *The mouth of the Lord having spoken it*, the voice has this further to cry (he that has ears to hear let him hear it), *The word of our God shall stand for ever*, v. 8.

**1.** By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure and what may be safely relied on. *Then* we are prepared for deliverance when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed: in a dependence upon this word we must be brought to own that *all flesh is grass*, withering and fading.

**(1.)** The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord: it shall wither and be trodden down. The insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it.

**(2.)** The power of man, when it would appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains. They shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated: *The Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them*; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and, as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

**2.** The word of our God, that glory of the Lord which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and fading

like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to *the word which by the gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again*, <sup><102></sup>1 Peter 1:23-25. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced,

**(1.)** Of the vanity of the creature, that all flesh is grass, weak and withering. We ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures; all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls. We must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion.

**(2.)** Of the validity of the promise of God. We must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us which all flesh cannot that, forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things that are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

## <sup><200></sup>ISAIAH 40:9-11

### EVANGELICAL PREDICTIONS

It was promised (v. 5) *that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*; that is it with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

**I.** How it shall be revealed, v. 9.

**1.** It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them. This shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them. Zion is said to *dwell with the daughter of Babylon* (<sup><300></sup>Zechariah 2:7); and there she receives notice of Cyrus's gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion*, etc., meaning the persons who were employed in publishing that proclamation; let them do

it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, *saying to them, Behold your God.*

**2.** It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem (so the text reads it); those that remain there, or that have already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding towards perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loudly as they can: let them *lift up their voice with strength*, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves; let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it and quarrel with them, or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first it appeared; let them say to the cities of Judah, and all the inhabitants of the country, *Behold your God.* When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends, let them tell them that it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments, God was the author; it is *their* God, a God in covenant with them, and he does it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. “Behold him, take notice of his hand in it, and look above second causes; behold, the God you have long looked for has come at last (<sup><230></sup>Isaiah 25:9): *This is our God, we have waited for him.*” This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar, immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in their sacrifices, <sup><300></sup>Ezra 3:24. “When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren, that they may share with you in the comfort of it.” But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was coming; but now notice is given that he has come. *Behold the Lamb of God*; take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your King, behold your God.

**II.** What that glory is which shall be revealed. “Your God will come, will show himself,”

**1.** “With the power and greatness of a prince (v. 10): *He will come with strong hand*, too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies. He will come who is strong enough to break through all the difficulties that lie in his way.” Our Lord Jesus was



full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read, it, *He will come against the mighty one*, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, and he shall make it to appear that he is so, for,

**(1.)** He shall reign in defiance of all opposition: *His arm shall rule*, shall overrule *for him*, for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own end.

**(2.)** He shall recompense to all according to their works, as a righteous Judge: *His reward is with him*; he brings along with him, as a returning prince, punishments for the rebels and preferments for his loyal subjects.

**(3.)** He shall proceed and accomplish his purpose: *His work is before him*, that is, he knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it. *He himself knows what he will do*.

**2.** “With the pity and tenderness of a shepherd,” v. 11. God is the *Shepherd of Israel* (<sup><380></sup>Psalm 80:1); Christ is the good Shepherd, <sup><381></sup>John 10:11. The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd.

**(1.)** He takes care of all his flock, the little flock: *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*. His word is food for his flock to feed on; his ordinances are fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under-shepherds that are appointed to attend them.

**(2.)** He takes particular care of those that most need his care, the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are unaccustomed to hardship, and *those that are with young*, that are therefore heavy, and, if any harm be done them, are in danger of casting their young. He particularly takes care for a succession, that it may not fail or be cut off. The good Shepherd has tender care for children that are towardly and hopeful, for young converts, that are setting out in the way to heaven, for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit. These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires.

**[1.]** He will gather them in the arms of his power; his strength shall be made *perfect in their weakness*, <sup><471></sup>2 Corinthians 12:9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last;

and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, ~~418~~John 10:28.

[2.] He will carry them in the bosom of his love and cherish them there. When they tire or are weary, are sick and faint, when they meet with foul ways, he will carry them on, and take care they are not left behind.

[3.] He will gently lead them. By his word he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble, than he will fit them for; for he considers their frame.

## ~~2302~~ ISAIAH 40:12-17

### EVANGELICAL PREDICTIONS

The scope of these verses is to show what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here,

**1.** To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were ever so weak and their oppressors ever so strong.

**2.** To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him.

**3.** To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said (v. 9), *Behold your God*, and (v. 11) *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and fear before him; for,

**I.** His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, v. 12.

**1.** He has a vast reach. View the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God *metes the heavens with a span*; to him they are but a hand-breadth, so large-handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too. All the waters in the world he can *measure in the hollow of his hand*, where we can hold but a little water; and the dry land he easily manages, for he *comprehends the dust of*

*the earth in a measure*, or with his three fingers; it is no more to him than a *pugil*, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers.

2. He has a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; he poises them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned, and the earth and waters were put together in just proportions, as if they had been measured, and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more. Or it may refer to the work of providence (which is a continued creation) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

II. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, v. 13, 14. As none can do what God has done and does, so none can assist him in the doing of it or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world (~~KB~~ Job 26:13) there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do or how to do it. Nor does he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor is there any with whom he consults, as the wisest kings do with those that *know law and judgment*, ~~KB~~ Esther 1:13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at court or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty. “No matter,” says the prophet, “you have a God to act for you, who needs not the assistance of statesmen.” In the great work of our redemption by Christ matters were concerted *before the world was*, when there was one to *teach God in the path of judgment*, ~~KB~~ 1 Corinthians 2:7.

III. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, v. 15, 17. Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles: *Before him*, when they stand in competition with him or in opposition to him, they are *as a drop of the bucket* compared with the vast ocean, or *the small dust of the balance* (which does not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small) in comparison with all the dust of the earth. *He takes them*

up, and throws them away from him, *as a very little thing*, not worth speaking of. They are all in his eye *as nothing*, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency. *They are counted by him*, and are to be counted by us in comparison of him, *less than nothing, and vanity*. When he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all *vanity*; the word that is used for the chaos (~~1000~~Genesis 1:2), to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, he *gave his only-begotten Son*, ~~4000~~John 3:16.

**IV.** The services of the church can make no addition to him nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections (v. 16): *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn*; not the wood of it, to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; not the beasts of it, to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, v. 16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted *far above all blessing and praise*, all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

## ~~3000~~ISAIAH 40:18-26

### THE VANITY OF IDOLS

The prophet here reproveth those,

- 1.** Who represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie and his glory into shame, who made images and then said that they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly.
- 2.** Who put creatures in the place of God, who feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, *To whom will you liken God?* v. 18, and again v. 25. The Holy One himself says, *To whom will you liken me?* This shows the folly and absurdity,

(1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the deity, and the deity to be presentiated by the image, which, as it was an instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature.

(2.) Of spiritual idolatry, making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God; and whatever we esteem or love, fear or hope in, more than God, that creature we equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is *God over all*. Now, to show the absurdity of this,

**I.** The prophet describes idols as despicable things and worthy of the greatest contempt (v. 19, 20): “Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up, and worship; they are made of some base metal, cast into what shape the founder pleases, and that is gilded, or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for the workman made it; *therefore it is not God,* <sup>306</sup>Hosea 8:6. It depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper, in this indeed representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worst sort of them the poor men's gods! *He that is so impoverished* that he has scarcely a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him will yet not be without an enshrined deity of his own; and, though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one rather than none, and for that purpose *chooses a tree that will not soon rot*, and of that he will have his graven image made. Both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix theirs with; and, though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it *shall not be moved.*” Let us pause a little and see,

**1.** How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason, in dreaming that gods of their own making (*Nehushtans*, pieces of brass or logs of wood) should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations; and how was their foolish heart darkened!

2. See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God. They spared no cost upon their idols; we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God. They took care that their idols should not be moved; we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

II. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God he appeals,

1. To what they had *heard of him by the hearing of the ear*, and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him (v. 21): “*Have you not known by the very light of nature? Has it not been told you by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even from the beginning?*” (Those notices of God are as ancient as the world.) “*Have you not understood it as always acknowledged from the foundation of the earth, that God is a great God, and a great King above all gods?*” It has been a truth universally admitted that there is an infinite Being who is the fountain of all being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe. It is founded upon the foundation of the earth. The invisible things of God are *clearly seen from the creation of the world*, <sup>(~~R01~~)</sup> Romans 1:20. Thou mayest not only ask thy father, and he shall tell thee this, and thy elders (<sup>(~~R02~~)</sup> Deuteronomy 32:7); but *ask those that go by the way* (<sup>(~~R03~~)</sup> Job 21:29), ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it, *Will you not know? Will you not hear it?* For those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant; the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it. Now that which is here said of God is,

(1.) That he has the command of all the creatures. The heaven and the earth themselves are under his management: *He sits upon the circle, or globe, of the earth*, v. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory. He sits undisturbed upon the earth, and so establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening these curtains in the morning and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is

to this earth *as a tent to dwell in*; it is a canopy drawn over our heads, *et quod tegit omnia coelum* and it encircles all. Ovid. See <sup><BAM></sup>Psalm 104:2.

**(2.)** That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are in his eye as grasshoppers in ours, so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men's lifting up themselves is but like the grasshopper's leap; in an instant they must stoop down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak (<sup><Q133></sup>Numbers 13:33), what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

**(3.)** That those who appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humble and brought down by the mighty hand of God, v. 23, 24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of those about them; *as for all their enemies they puff at them* (<sup><B15></sup>Psalm 10:5; 12:5); but, when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity, little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments, which shall either,

**[1.]** Prevent their settlement in their authority: *They shall not be planted; they shall not be sown*; and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little interest, and so be planted or sown, yet *their stock shall not take root in the earth*, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but *suddenly cursed their habitation*. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or,

**[2.]** He will blast them when they think they are settled. He does but *blow upon them*, and then *they shall wither*, and come to nothing, and *the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble*. For God's wrath, though it seem at first to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind. When God judges he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

**2.** He appeals to what *their eyes saw of him* (v. 26): "*Lift up your eyes on high; be not always poring on this earth*" (*O curvae in terras animae et coelestium inanes! Degenerate minds, that can bend so towards the earth,*

having nothing celestial in them!), “but sometimes look up” (*Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri jussit* Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars); “behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves; doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power, and motion.” What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them, <sup><RMB></sup>Deuteronomy 4:19; <sup><SBZ></sup>Job 31:26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them *He brings out their host by number*, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has of them *He calls them all by names*, proper names, according as their place and influence are (<sup><BEB></sup>Psalm 147:4); and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they that, *by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails*, but, as when *the stars in their courses fought against Sisera*, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

## <sup><BEB></sup>ISAIAH 40:27-31

### JEHOVAH'S GRANDEUR AND COMPASSION

Here,

**I.** The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction (v. 27): “*Why sayest thou, O Jacob! to thyself and to those about thee, My way is hidden from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself and thy present case as if the latter were desperate?*”

**1.** The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts: *O Jacob! O Israel!* Let them remember whence they took these names from one who had found God faithful to him and kind in all his



straits; and why they bore these names as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him.

**2.** The way of reproofing them is by reasoning with them: “Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so.” Many of our foolish frets and foolish fears would vanish before a strict enquiry into the causes of them.

**3.** That which they are reproofed for is an ill-natured, ill-favoured, word they spoke of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it: Why *sayest* thou and *speakest* thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an *imprimatura sanction* to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress.

**4.** The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude,

**(1.)** That God would not heed them: “*My way is hidden from the Lord; he takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concerns. There are such difficulties in our case that even divine wisdom and power will be nonplussed.*” A man *whose way is hidden* is one whom *God has hedged in*, <sup><451></sup>Job 3:23.

**(2.)** That God could not help them: “*My judgment is passed over from my God; my case is past relief, so far past it that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it. Our bones are dried.*” <sup><571></sup>Ezekiel 37:11.

**II.** He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all those fears and distrust. For their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters (v. 21), he appeals to what they had known and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing; for Wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that *God had spoken once, twice, yea, many a time they had heard it, That power belongs unto God* (<sup><571></sup>Psalm 62:11), That is,

**1.** He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is *the everlasting God, even Jehovah*. He was from eternity; he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also *the Creator of the ends of the*

*earth*, that is, of the whole earth and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful owner and ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world.

(1.) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss: *There is no searching of his understanding*, so as to countermine the counsels of it and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, "Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further;" for, when we know not what to do, he knows.

(2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted: *He faints not, nor is weary*; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought ever so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God is the strength of Israel.

(1.) He can help the weak, v. 29. Many a time *he gives power to the faint*, to those that are ready to faint away; and *to those that have no might he* not only gives, but *increases strength*, as there is more and more occasion for it. Many out of bodily weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unfit for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God *with all might in the inward man*. To those who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, *when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord*.

(2.) He will help the willing, will help those who, in a humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, v. 30, 31. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of it that they neither exert themselves to the utmost nor seek unto God for his grace, are *the youth and the young men*, who are strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they *shall faint and be weary*, yea, they *shall utterly fail* in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burdens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to

themselves. *But those that wait on the Lord*, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him and commit themselves to his guidance, shall find that God will not fail them.

[1.] They shall have grace sufficient for them: They *shall renew their strength* as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied, with fresh oil. God will be their *arm every morning*, <sup><23RD></sup>Isaiah 33:2. If at any time they have been foiled and weakened they shall recover themselves, and so renew their strength. Hebrews *They shall change their strength*, as their work is changedoing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day so shall the strength be.

[2.] They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, *First*, They shall soar upward, upward towards God: *They shall mount up with wings like eagles*, so strongly, so swiftly, so high and heaven-ward. In the strength of divine grace, their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles' wings on which gracious souls mount up, <sup><1ST></sup>Psalms 25:1. *Secondly*, They shall press forward, forward towards heaven. They shall walk, they shall run, the way of God's commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity (they *shall not be weary*), constantly and with perseverance (they *shall not faint*); and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their greatest distresses, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief and succour from him.

In this chapter we have,

- I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption (v. 1, 2).
- II. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed (v. 35), and that, though all creatures fail and fade, the word of God shall be established and accomplished (v. 68).
- III. A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it (v. 911).

**IV.** The sovereignty and power of that God magnified who undertakes to work out this redemption (v. 12-17).

**V.** Idols therefore triumphed over and idolaters upbraided with their folly (v. 18-26).

**VI.** A reproof given to the people of God for their fears and despondencies, and enough said, in a few words, to silence those fears (v. 27-31). And we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.