



UPCOMING DATES ...

Steps of Hope – 29 April
INCollege – commences 30 April
Woman to Woman – commences 1 May
Women's Encounter – 5 to 7 May
LIT – commences 7 May
Kids "Blast" (Kindy to Yr 6) – Sunday nights
Christian Character Course – register online
Imagine Recovery – Every Thursday Night

2017 – CG Notes #7

STRONGER

Title: His Strength, My Weakness

Key Scripture:

Isaiah 40:28-31(NKJV)

28 Have you not known?

Have you not heard?

The everlasting God, the Lord,

The Creator of the ends of the earth,

Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

*29 He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.*

*30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,*

*31 But those who wait on 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.*

There is an obvious contrast between the strength that God has and our own. The strongest man, the most energetic youth – even their strength will fail, but God never runs out of strength.

Our key passage is God’s response, through Isaiah to the unbelief and discouragement that was prevalent in Israel. They had endured decades of conflict with the Assyrians and then, by chapter 40, the time of the Babylonians was upon them. It seemed that they had run out of hope and strength.

It seems they felt the same about God – maybe He wasn’t as powerful as He once was? Maybe He no longer was able to help them? It appears that they projected their view of themselves and their circumstances on to God.

God is limited by nothing.

We are finite and limited in our abilities. We come to the end of what we can do.

Yet at times, life demands that we be more than we are – that at our weakest moments we somehow need to find strength to continue.

To compound the matter, at our weakest moments there is the temptation to feel that we are alone in the moment – “maybe God doesn’t see me, or if He does see, He does not care.”

The Lord heard the lament of the people and repeated their words back to them:

Isaiah 40:27 NKJV

*Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel:
“My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God”?*

Israel's thoughts about God had reached an all-time low. They needed to be reminded of what God is like and what He is able to do.

Discuss:

- Get out your Bibles and look over Isaiah 40. Throughout this chapter, God reveals Himself in multiple ways and describes His power, His abilities and His heart towards His people.
- Make a list of these attributes. For sake of time, you might divide the chapter into sections and work on them individually or in pairs.
- Israel needed to re-set their thinking about God before they would be able to receive His strength. What effect does meditating upon God's greatness and goodness have upon your own heart?
- What stands out to you in this chapter and speaks to a need in your life?

Thoughts worthy of our God

Israel needed to adjust their thinking about the Lord and very often we do too. If we are to trust in the Lord and receive His strength, then it follows that we must have a rock-solid trust in a God Who is greater than and stronger than anything we will ever encounter.

Clearly if we are to wait upon the Lord as our key verse tells us, then it follows that we must hold unreserved trust in His character and in His ability to help us.

We would think that this is "a given" but it is not always the case. Too often we have a concept of God that is unworthy of Him. These are false concepts that we must seek to eliminate them from our thoughts and our speech.

On our Encounter weekends, one of the core teachings is "What is God like?" and we seek to align our thoughts of Him with the Word of God. If you struggle in this area, you might consider reviewing these notes. The notes are in-depth and rich in truth regarding the nature of God. Renewing your mind in this way will help you become stronger in your faith in Him.

We need to lift Him up in our thoughts. He **already is** high and lifted up, but **we need** to elevate the Lord God in our thinking and in our speaking.

In all times, particularly tough times we should cultivate a “praise vocabulary.” We need to learn how to “magnify the Lord.” **Magnify means:** to praise, to celebrate, to honour, to highly value.

A favourite song of children has been, “My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing my God cannot do!” We might help ourselves a great deal by becoming like little children in this manner and firmly believe in the strength and the power of the Lord.

Psalm 118:16 (NLT)

The strong right arm of the Lord is raised in triumph.

The strong right arm of the Lord has done glorious things!

Psalm 147:5 (AMP)

Great is our Lord and of great power; His understanding is inexhaustible and boundless.

- Shift your focus from the problem and on to God Who is so great.
- God’s will is that we live strong and unafraid.
- You won’t be able to do this if your thoughts and beliefs about God are dwarfed or shrivelled up.
- Sometimes the hits we take in life, take our eyes off of the truth and we look more at the fall out of life.

Paul knew this truth: don’t look at what you see – look to the God Who you can’t see and on things eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NLT)

16 That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. 17 For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

- Where are you looking?
- Who are you looking to?

God in a box

There will be times when we feel that God doesn’t act the way we think He should act or He doesn’t do things the way we think He should. This type of belief will trip us up every time. We need to “let” God be God and not recreate Him into the image of what we think He should be.

Ps. Kyle Idleman is a well-known Southern Baptist pastor in the USA. Below is an excerpt from a message he preached in 2012 entitled, “Your God is too small.”

A basic problem with Christians and the church today – is **an unworthy concept of God**, - let me put it this way -our God is too small

If you believe God exists to make your life more comfortable and convenient – then your God is too small

If your God says things to you like “well -don’t take a risk, play it safe” - then your God is too small.

If your God’s job is to obey you and do what you want when you want Him to do it, a genie that exists to grant your wishes– then your God is too small.

If your God operates on your time-table and *you keep* His calendar – then your God is too small.

If your God is always saying “come” but never saying “go”, then your God is too small.

If your God never wrecks your plans or messes up your schedule, if your God never asks you to do something that’s not in the budget – then your God is too small.

If your God has never filled your eyes with tears because of His grace or taken away your breath because of His power – then your God is too small.

If your God always agrees with you... and always thinks your opinions and preferences are the most reasonable, if He always likes what you like ...

If your God says you’re too old, or too young, too poor, too broken or too guilty or too late, then your God is too small.

If your God fits nicely into a box – then that’s not God! You open it up you’ll find that He’s not in there because He doesn’t do boxes!