

Isaiah about Fainting

Prayer Day

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Bible Text: Isaiah 40:9-31; Isaiah 40:28-31

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Congregation, you know when we study a text from the Bible that we also have to read the text in its context, so that's why ministers preach in the word of God and studying it often have to read the whole chapter first. The whole chapter maybe a few times. And then we look at regularities, we look at repetitions, we look at certain words that stand out all the time and doing that also with Isaiah 40, I saw a word, the word "faint" and the word "faint" occurred four times, not only in English, also in the Hebrew it was the same word four times. It is in the last four verses of Isaiah 40 so let's read the last four verses and look at the word "faint," 28-31.

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah about fainting. After introduction, four thoughts. The four times you find the word "faint" here indicates four thoughts: the Creator does not faint; secondly, giving power to the faint; in the third place, the youths shall faint; and in the fourth place, them waiting upon the Lord shall not faint. Isaiah about fainting, after the introduction: the Creator does not faint; giving power to the faint; youth shall faint; them waiting upon the Lord shall not faint.

Congregation, Isaiah 40 is an interesting chapter, also those last verses of fainting. What's meant by fainting? I'm sure if I ask young people about fainting they will say, "You pass out. You are unconscious. You have your eyes closed." That's kind of scary to faint in church and they have to carry you out because you can't walk at all anymore. Well, it can be that bad but the word used in the Bible here, fainting means kind of having no strength anymore, you cannot stand up anymore, you succumb. You almost pass out, yes, but not so far yet. You're extremely tired. You have absolutely no energy anymore. You can

hardly breathe. You're fainting. You feel weak. You cannot do the work anymore. You're discouraged even and you feel down about that, not able to stand up. That's not easy.

So using the word of our text and the words of this chapter, fainting means you cannot run, right? You don't have the strength to run. It means you have no strength to stand up. You are weary and you fall. You fall, you just stumble and you fall because of the lack of energy, the lack of strength. And the opposite of fainting, do you know what it is then in the Bible in this chapter? Having understanding. Having power. Renew their strength. Mounting up like eagles. Having control and strength and stamina and ability to continue on for a long time like young people often have, they have so much energy they can run the whole day. For example, think of soldiers in Afghanistan. They're attacked and they keep attacking them and they try to defend themselves and they fight back and it takes hours and hours, and sometimes goes on and they have hardly any sleep, and under those circumstances they may feel dizzy and feel exhausted. That's the thought here, being exhausted.

What does Isaiah mean by that? Isaiah writes to people of Israel and they will experience exhaustion. They will. Isaiah wrote in a time that the people of Israel had not gone into captivity yet but they saw it coming. They saw it coming that they would have to walk all the way to Babylon and be tired, and also there in Babylon experienced their weakness as a people. They will experience that. Do you recognize that? Do you sometimes feel that way, in captivity and no strength maybe physically? Maybe when you compare yourself with 40 years ago, you were strong and you could run and you could work in the garden for hours, the whole day, and now after an hour it's maybe enough. With our elderly, they experience that. Not enough strength. They need more help. Others are taking over things. They work less hours. So for example in a physical sense, in a physical sense, yes, fatigued. And after a couple of hours you may be okay again, you're fine again, it's even healthy to get your heart rate up and after it is feeling depleted but, you know, that is something that we also think about for the future. Some are sick and some say, "I need that strength. I need to continue on. I would like to have some more strength to continue for a while yet, to do my work."

But we also may feel worn, maybe worn out emotionally, under constant verbal abuse, for example. Or having experienced a huge amount of stress in business, personal life. Your brain feels maybe overheated. You can't go on much longer. And especially when we suffer somehow, we may have a cross to bear, we might feel drained. So not physically so much but emotionally, feeling mortal, feeling fragile, feeling maybe forgotten by the Lord in your circumstances. Maybe you feel ignored by your Maker as if the Lord doesn't care, emotionally does not care.

We can also feel this spiritually and there is overlap here. Spiritually fainting. No comfort. You're physically doing well and emotionally not that bad either, but spiritually that emptiness, that sinful nature, that mission of God, having no strength to bring yourself to the Lord, having no hands to receive it, no feet to come. Spiritually you can't believe, you can't repent, you cannot do this and that and you feel kind of at your wit's

end, so tired of seeking and not having been able to find because of our blindness and unwillingness.

And of course, it can be a combination of physical, emotional, spiritual. Having not enough sleep, physically not doing too well and being sick, lots of stress on top of that, and feeling that you can't keep up spiritually. That's quite a load. You may feel down about many things. That feeling of, "I cannot pray. I cannot bring myself closer to the Lord. I don't understand the sermons." Christ being so hidden, so far away. "God is so far away." Sometimes you remember times that you felt close to the Lord but it's all gone, all out the window and you feel poor and maybe weak. Then you really feel also spiritually, "Without him I can do nothing, absolutely nothing." You sit in church and you feel you're dependent upon the Lord and you listen along at home and you say, "Lord, I can't do anything."

Concerns for the future as well. Concerns about the business and the marriage and children and adoption and you name it. Circumstances about children, obnoxious and not willing to listen and sometimes bigger families with lots of concerns and the future might look dim. And what is going to happen with the COVID pandemic, is it really a pandemic? Is it really getting worse? Is it that we have a third wave? What's going to happen? People can be so concerned and so worried about the future.

So how do you feel tonight? Could you verbalize that for yourself tonight? I won't give you time now but maybe after the sermon you can do it, just sit yourself down and say, "What's bothering me? How do I feel right now on prayer day? What do I need to be worried about? What do I want to pray for? Why do I feel weak, in what sense do I feel weak? In more than one sense, I guess." The comforting thing is that the Lord knows how we feel. Maybe you have a hard time to express yourself but the Lord says, verse 27 of our chapter, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" So that's what they're saying, that's how they feel and the Lord knows that. Don't you think the Lord knows how you feel? "Why sayest thou. I know what you're saying. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD. He doesn't care. He looks the other way. My circumstances are hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God. My God looks the other way." That's how it sometimes feels.

So we often feel and we read about that fainting, about that weakness, so let me quote a few Psalms, quite familiar Psalms in this context of feeling weak and worried. Of course you know Psalm 42, don't you? "My soul thirsteth for God." That's weakness, thirsteth for God, "for the living God," I have death in my heart, "when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" They say to me, Where is thy God? Your heart tells us, Satan tells us, people may tell us, "Where is your God now?" Those voices, "Where is your God?"

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast

down within me." Do you see that? Maybe that's you, cast down within me, "therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." You hear those waterfalls, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." That feeling that the Lord is coming with all his waves, all his billows, and I can't keep standing. I just fall in the flood. Psalm 73, "And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued," all the day long plagued, "and chastened every morning. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."

So so far the background. Israel fainting physically, emotionally, spiritually, circumstances, feeling so far from the Lord, and Isaiah now will speak to that people and we begin in verse 28, the Lord speaking to such a weary people, "Hast thou not known?" Do you hear the kindness in his voice? "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard," haven't you heard, "that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." Begin with the last word, there is no searching of his understanding. He knows. He understands. We don't. We try to find out all the details and we'd like to be in charge and in control of things and think to be wise, but the Lord is the wisest. There's no end in searching his understanding.

So why is he saying that? Could we not give our life and circumstances and all things over in his hands? He is an understanding God. He knows what to do. He knows how to solve things. He's wise, wiser, infinitely wise. So have you forgotten? Have you not known? Have you not heard? Yea, you've heard and you hear it again tonight that the everlasting God from eternity to eternity, we can't fathom that, the everlasting God has no beginning and no end, infinite, the infinite God, he is not weary, he is not fainting, he is not weak, he is not powerless, he can solve it, he can do it.

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD," the LORD with four capitals, LORD with L-O-R-D all capitalized." You know what that means, right, when they are all capitalized instead of only one? Sometimes it's only the "L" capitalized, now it's four capitalized. That means that in the original it is the word Jahweh or Jehovah, depending how you translate it. Jehovah, the covenant God. The God who does not forget, who's faithful to himself and faithful to his promises, and continues and is there yet and does not disappear and does not turn a blind eye on people.

"Hast thou not known?" Could you answer that, please? "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard," haven't you heard, "that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth," of everything on earth, the Creator, he made everything out of nothing. Look at the mountains, look at the sunshine, look at the flowers, look at the beginning of spring, look at the stars, it's all in this chapter. Look. Have you not heard? Have you not seen? The Lord, the Creator, he can do it. He can help you. If he's on your side and you are on his side rather, all things will be well and you can rely on him, the God who understands, the God who doesn't faint, the God who is the Creator, the God who is so kind. He is not fainting. He is not weary. He does not sleep. He does not slumber. "He

will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is my keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand," David said in 121.

So let me just repeat the facts. There is a God. He knows. He's asking, "Have you not heard?" There's a God who is infinite, a God who's wise, a God who makes things out of nothing. Just they're not there and they're there out of nothing, no explanation for it. Suddenly it is there. So in the context of this chapter, that means that "the grass withereth," right, from weakness, "the flower fadeth," it looked beautiful for a while, fading, that's how people are, maybe you've experienced that, death, "But the word," oh, the word of God, of our God "shall stand." Do you see the strength? The word of God shall stand forever, that's in our text. God's word stands. He is alive. He keeps an eye on people, especially on his people. He's not only the Creator of the universe, he creates new hearts. He creates a new will. And all things are possible with him. In spite of the crosses and the stress and the loneliness and the mourning and the spiritual darkness, and the feeling of being forsaken, he is the same God. He has not changed.

Have you heard? Do you believe in this God? Can't you give things over into his hands tonight? There is no searching of his understanding. You should do that, give it over. He knows best. We don't. He is so wise, so extremely infinitely wise. All things work together according to his plan. He knows most perfectly what he is doing. There are no limits to his understanding. What a peace would there be to your heart on prayer day if you could give your soul in spite of your sins and your circumstances and your fears and everything, your hopes and your longing, if you could give it all over to him and say, "Lord, I don't want to have it all in a basket. I give it over to thee. I have to do that."

To the God who does not faint, what a comfort. Second thought: giving power to the faint. Verse 29, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." So God has the strength, God has the power, and he gives it to them that are fainting. To the fainting ones. The strong ones don't need it. The strong ones, they can manage themselves. They're fine and they don't get that help. They don't get it because they don't even need it. And God always makes first a need, he likes to create a need so there is prayer and an urgency and a longing and a cry to God. So the Lord is hearing those cries, that's the way he is glorified, that's the way he gets appreciation, that's the way he gets joy.

So God gives the strength to get up, physically maybe but emotionally and spiritually to get up, to stand and to walk and to run. You know, sometimes you may have had a feeling, "I can't walk anymore. I can't run anymore. I mean, literally maybe but spiritually I can. I have just no energy at all anymore." But God teaches how to run and to be strong in him, in Christ, in Christ the Savior who was so weak but yet so strong, who died on the cross and has given himself over unto death and yet rose from the dead. So God teaches to run and to be strong in him; in him and with him you can do it. For you, it's for yourself and you are thinking of someone else, you're thinking about your son, your daughter, your grandchild, maybe there are certain concerns in this prayer day today? So you feel that you can't help? You feel that you are fainting and you feel that maybe others

are fainting in that sense as well? He giveth power to the faint; to them in need, and to them that have no might he increaseth their strength.

Remember the Israelites before the Red Sea? They had been freed from Egypt and they were so happy. Finally delivered and then they see behind them some dust clouds, it's Pharaoh coming after them. To the left mountains, to the right mountains, and they are near the sea and there's no way. They're trapped and they will all be slaughtered and they are complaining, "Why did we leave Egypt after all, to die here in the wilderness?" And Moses is stretching out his arm over the sea and there's a path and they go through the path of the sea, and then on the other side the water comes back again and Pharaoh and they all drown and they sing, Exodus 15. What do they sing? "The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation." Do you see? They are so weak, as if the Lord is smiling at them, he looks at the people, petrified, and he shows them his wonders and they appreciate his glory and his power and his strength. "The LORD is my strength and song." Or think of David, he sings about it in Psalm 22 and 28 and 46 and 73. "God is my strength and my power. He maketh my way perfect." Do you see? He could give it over, "He maketh my way perfect." Nothing goes wrong.

The Lord is their strength and he is the saving strength of his anointed. The saving strength. He saves by his strength. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Very present. In all those troubles, he is our refuge and our strength. Is he? Is he in your circumstances with your heart, with your sins, is he your refuge? I hope he is, and if not may that be tonight, to take refuge unto him not only with your problems but also your sins. Everything.

"My flesh and my heart faileth but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." He gives me so much strength in my heart. Oh, that's a joy when God gives us such a strength. A joy, a real joy. "Sing aloud unto God, our strength. Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob." When you have no strength, you are fainting, and he helps you.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, no might, no might, he increaseth strength. How poor without that strength. What a blessing with that strength. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." Blessed people. Others may have different opinions on that, you may sometimes feel pity yourself, you pity yourself. That's not a good place to be but it happens, but if your strength may be in him, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them."

So it might be a blessing to be so weak and to be needy because the Lord will seek that which is lost and bring again that which is poor and driven away. He will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick, but he will destroy the fat and the strong. So I hope that you are not so strong, "I can do it! I'm smart. I'm keen. I'm a businessman. I can manage. I know what to do. I have experience. I have age. And also spiritually I know how to believe and how to serve the Lord and I can work myself up to heaven with good works." "I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will feed them with judgment." Strong is related to the Trinity, a strong God helping physically, yes, that's

included, emotionally, we mentioned that, spiritually because of your guilt, and it's all in Christ.

Third thought: youth shall faint. Verse 30, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." The youth shall faint? Young people have endurance. When you go hiking with a family and the younger ones are sometimes the first on the top of the mountain and they just keep running the whole day. Young people can do that. Endurance. Keeping up. Not so easily out of breath. But you know, you also see the opposite happening like Goliath, right? Remember children, Goliath the giant, the tall man, heavily armed, and that small David there? Goliath was certain of his victory. He felt a young man himself and he was making a huge mistake as a little pebble stone hit him in his forehead and you heard him fall, a kind of a thud like the whole earth was shaking the Bible says.

So the Lord is confounding the things which are mighty and people are strong and the Lord just has kind of a pleasure in it to let them know they are weak, and that's for his glory and that's for his glory and it's for their welfare, that's good for them because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," like Mary and Joseph and Zacharias and Elizabeth and all those circumstances, "and the base things of the world and things which are despised has God chosen and things which are not to bring to not things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." It meant the Lord is there. Don't glory in your own strength in his presence. The Lord wants the glory, he wants the honor.

So the Lord does not like it when people are independent and overly confident and strong and courageous, they can do it all themselves without him. The Lord has no appreciation for that. He likes people to be weak all the time, in all circumstances be weak, and yet trust in him, rely on him in all things. There are no exceptions, in all things. So whatever you're suffering from, whatever is bothering you, it needs to be brought to that place. "Therefore," Paul said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake for when I am weak, then I'm strong." When I'm weak then I'm strong.

So the Lord likes that when people are weak and when people take pleasure in the weakness. "I take pleasure in infirmities. I like to be weak. I like to not be able. I like to depend upon the Lord. I like the Lord to do it." That's a good life. And also in a spiritual sense in the beginning and more and more in the course of time, to experience that the Lord needs to give it, that the Lord needs to give strength and comfort again, that you don't get stronger yourself, that you don't become more self-confident but that you rely more and more on him. Do you know the Apostle Peter was also strong? Do you know he said, "I will never ever deny the Master. I won't do that thing. Not me. Even if they would all deny thee, I won't." That's what he said. That's what he said and you know what happens, right? I see him crying bitterly. He did it. He denied the Master. He swore. He

denied him three times. Bitter tears. So he was relying on himself and he had to understand to take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches in necessities and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, "for when I am weak then I'm strong."

There's a famous text in the Bible, I will quote the text that occurs six times almost exactly the same, almost, six times in the New Testament so that must be a very important text, no? Six times in the Bible in the New Testament? Listen to the text. "He that findeth his life," that's feel good, he, "He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it." So the Lord likes it when people are losing things, getting poor and weak and more dependent, and then he's in charge. Very important verse, six times in the gospels. So what could that mean for you? To lose all things, to let things go, right? Let things go, to not hold it in your own hands but give it over in the hands of God and to rely on him completely.

Then the fourth thought: them waiting upon the Lord shall not faint. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Fourth time that you see the word "faint" there, them waiting upon the Lord. You probably remember what the word "waiting" means in the Bible. It doesn't say waiting for but they that wait upon. To wait upon is more, is expecting something from, it's leaning upon someone, it's committing your ways unto him. Waiting is not just sitting back and just waiting a little bit, it's really an active waiting, an expectation, a seeking of strength in the Lord, giving your concerns over. Lay them all at his feet, that's the waiting. Let the Lord take care of it. Let go. Let your problems go. Let go. Let loose. Give them over unto him. Wait upon the Lord. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. If you don't wait upon him, you don't receive strength. It makes you more and more tired.

So I don't know what you're struggling with but very briefly, let God take care of it. Let God take care of it. "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." I looked that up what that means, renew their strength. I thought, "What does that mean 'renew'?" It's of a tree that you cut down or prune and it comes back. Those branches are coming back. There is growth in there. It's a new tree again. It was kind of cut down and it is sprouting up again. So renewing their strength like a tree, that tree looks dead in the winter and you have pruned it and then it's coming back. That's an example of the life of God's people too. They receive their strength, they renew their strength physically maybe sometimes, emotionally, sure, psychologically, that's the same, spiritually, that's also possible that God's children renew their strength by waiting upon God and giving it over in his hands and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing in him, that's what it is. Waiting is also a believing in him, a trusting of him.

And then the famous text about eagles, right? Not per se bald eagles, I think, but eagles in general, maybe the golden eagle. There are in the Bible quite a few texts, I think five texts in the Bible about eagles so let me just go over those and see what it says about that strength.

Sometimes eagles carry their young on their wings. They push them out of the nest and just go under them and catch them again and just teach them how to soar and how to go and how to fly. And they are taken up by the winds. That's how the Lord refers to the people, Israel, taking them out of Egypt. Exodus 19, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." That's strength when the Lord comes under you and catches you like the eagle does and gives you strength. And that's what the Lord is doing. We need it and that's how the Lord works, giving strength by those arms under you.

Eagles can fly fast, especially when they dive, what a speed that is. And what does David sing about Saul and Jonathan? "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." In the fire, he was strong like an eagle so they were agile and strong and adamant and powerful. You know, you may have seen an eagle going over the water and suddenly he catches a fish, or suddenly he catches on the land a mouse or a rat, and that poor animal is not expecting anything, just suddenly the eagle on him. It's an image of death. Death comes so suddenly, you didn't see it coming. "They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."

You know, eagles are also shy. They are sitting in a tree, you look at them and all of a sudden they're gone and they fly away, they don't like your presence. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." You're rich, you have things and gone they are. You get sick, you die and it's over.

So they that wait, they that believe on the Lord and trust in the one name given among men by whom we might be saved shall mount up with wings like the eagles, given strength, they shall run, they couldn't but they shall run because they're waiting, they will not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. So they have expected, "I won't live long. I can't live this way. I'm so tired of this life. I can't continue on this way." But with the strength of the Lord they can walk and they can run and they don't faint. It's amazing how weak people, emotionally weak or physically weak or spiritually weak, can yet receive that strength and run.

And yes, that's what you see in the Lord Jesus, right? He died. He gave up the ghost, yielded the ghost into his Father's hands. He had the power to lay it down and the power to take it up. He rose from the dead. He is at the right hand of the Father and he is strong. He is with the Father, the strong God, the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, he does, and to them that have no might, no might at all, he increaseth the strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, count on that, and the young man shall utterly fail and fall, but they that wait upon the Lord, that's the difference, "But they that wait upon the LORD," that's the difference.

So how are you feeling now? I asked you before how do you feel and you verbalized for yourself maybe, "I feel this or that. That's a deep concern for me. I can't get over that."

And now after reading this word from the Bible, I hope that you can give it over and that you have such good thoughts of God and the Lord Jesus that you dare to, there's a fresh and living way that he has consecrated through his own blood that we have that boldness to enter into that throne of grace to find grace in times of need. Amen.