



Responding to Change

Isaiah 40:28-31

Last month you may have had children or grandchildren graduating from high school and college. In August and September, you may have children going to school for the first time, moving from middle school to high school, or perhaps from high school to college. The children and young adults in our families often change significantly over the summer. Summer can be a surprising time for slow yet subtle change.

The book of Isaiah is considered to be one of the deepest, richest, most significant books in the Old Testament. It is dominated by change—change that is slow, subtle, and sometimes silent, but change nonetheless. In Isaiah we come face to face with God as He is. Not as we imagine Him to be, not as others have told us He would be, but as He is. Isaiah is thorough, thoughtful, and insightful in his portrayal of the character and nature of God. For this reason, it is considered by some Old Testament scholars to be “the fifth Gospel.”

An Awareness of the Past (Isaiah 40:28)

The book of Isaiah belongs to a collection of five Old Testament books designated as the “Major Prophets.” Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel are considered major books due to their size, and they have a great deal to teach us.

When you read a passage of Scripture, it is always helpful to consider its historical context, theological content, and literary structure. Isaiah’s writing is both historical and prophetic, which is why his writings are considered “supra-historical.” Isaiah is deeply aware that he is writing in a manner that is above and beyond the immediacy of his own situation.

In chapters 1-39, Isaiah is writing to his original readers, his own generation. His primary message relates to the faithfulness of God in spite of the national and international upheaval

they are experiencing, the aggression of the neighboring countries, and the disappointing final years of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

In Isaiah 40, we move into the second half of the book and immediately recognize a major change. A tone of optimism and celebration pervades this chapter. The people of Israel and Judah have been in captivity and bondage for 70 years, but that is about to change.

The years of captivity have been extremely difficult. Isaiah reminds his people that despite the many questions they have about the pain and uncertainty of the previous years, they are loved by “the everlasting God.” Isaiah tells his readers that there has been no time when God was not, and there is no place where He is not. Isaiah then continues, “He is not... tired or weary”—God is never deficient in His actions and purposes; He is never in need; He never suffers from a lack of perceived resources, is never limited; neither does He lack understanding of what is going on. He is infinite and eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. God never grows tired or weary.

Isaiah is reminding his readers, and generations yet unborn, that we should never allow the circumstances we are facing to rob us of the assurance of His love or our understanding of who He is. Isaiah reminds his readers that it is in the eternal love of God that our confidence lies. Not in the circumstances of our lives, but in Him and Him alone.

A Glimpse of the Future (Isaiah 40:29)

Everyone who has ever faced a major decision realizes that at some point they either need to stand up and be counted, or remain where they are. These are often the defining moments of our lives. This was certainly the case for Isaiah’s original readers, and it is also true for us.

For you a defining moment may come in the form of a promotion or a new job. The decision may mean moving to another part of the country with your family, with a multiplicity of complications. In such circumstances, you often have more questions than answers.

For others, it may be a terminal illness, or perhaps a suicide of a family member, or the increasing dementia of a loved one. Maybe it is living with the fallout of an extramarital affair. Perhaps it is an addiction so toxic that you have injured yourself and everyone around you. Such painful circumstances may have crushed the life out of those you love and left them betrayed, broken, and wounded.

In the wee hours of the morning, your imagination, fears, and concerns may overwhelm you. There may seem to be no way out. Tears of regret and doubt dominate your thoughts and leave you emotionally raw and tender.

When you find yourself there, come back to the words of Isaiah 40. Remind yourself of His powerful promises, His healing and restoring love. Call to mind these words of promise: “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.” These are words you can trust, words that nourish your soul with God’s sustaining and enabling grace. Words that will strengthen and transform you and your children not just for the summer, or for high school or college, but for eternity. You can always trust and depend upon God amidst the change.

To watch Dr. Gibbons’ messages online, go to FirstPresGreenville.org (click the Media tab). His messages are also broadcast on WHNS-TV, Fox Carolina, each Sunday morning at 10:30.

