

The Book of Isaiah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 16: Comfort My People; the Greatness of God

Isaiah 40:1–31

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The aim of this lesson is to let Isaiah 40 do for your class what it did for its first hearers: replace anxiety and a shrunken view of God with rest in His incomparable greatness and tender comfort. Help the class feel the dramatic turn from the judgment of chapters 1–39 to the tenderness of 'Comfort, comfort my people' (40:1). Then walk them through the chapter's two great movements, the comfort God promises (40:1–11) and the greatness of the God who promises it (40:12–31), showing how the second is the foundation of the first. People are comforted not by being told their troubles are small but by being shown that their God is large.

Doctrinally, the load-bearing point is that the comfort and the 'new exodus' of Isaiah 40 are fulfilled in Christ and His church, not in a political restoration of modern national Israel. Press the New Testament's own interpretation: 40:3–5 is John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus (all four Gospels say so), and 40:6–8 is the enduring gospel word (1 Peter 1:24–25). The 'people' God comforts are ultimately spiritual Israel, the church, defined by the cross and not by ethnicity or a rebuilt temple (Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28–29; 9:6–8). Guard the class against reading Isaiah 40 as a real-estate forecast; lead them instead to hear it as the announcement that God Himself would come, in Christ, to redeem and to reign now.

Question 1

Student Question:

Isaiah 40 opens with God's command, 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God' (40:1–2), spoken to people facing exile. What does it reveal about the character of God that He sends words of comfort and announces that 'her warfare is ended' and 'her iniquity is pardoned' before the discipline has even fully come, and how does this shape the way we understand His dealings with His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After thirty-nine chapters dominated by warning and woe, Isaiah 40 opens like a sunrise. 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God' (40:1). Notice the tenderness packed into that one verse. The word is doubled for emphasis, the way you would repeat yourself to someone in shock who can barely take in good news. And the relationship is restated: 'my people... your God.' After all the rebellion Isaiah has catalogued, God still claims them as His own. That covenant tenderness is the heartbeat of the chapter.

Verse 2 tells the heralds to 'speak tenderly to Jerusalem,' literally to speak to her heart, and to cry to her three things: 'that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins' (40:2). The remarkable thing is the timing. Judah has not yet gone into exile. God is announcing the end of the discipline before the

discipline has fully begun. This is how God deals with His people: even His judgments are bounded by mercy, with the comfort prepared before the sorrow arrives.

We should not misread 'double for all her sins' as God being twice as harsh as the crime deserved. The picture is rather of a debt fully and abundantly paid, the discipline brought to completion so that nothing remains owing. For us this points forward to the cross, where the full price of sin was paid once for all, so that those in Christ hear the same word spoken over them: your warfare is ended, your iniquity is pardoned. Comfort, in the Bible, is never sentimental. It is rooted in real forgiveness.

This sets the tone for everything that follows. God is not a distant judge who has washed His hands of His people. He is a Father who disciplines and then, with the same hand, binds up and consoles. When we come to a passage like this, we are meant to hear God's heart toward His own: tender, faithful, and committed to having the last word be mercy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's covenant faithfulness: even after Judah's long rebellion He still says 'my people... your God' (40:1), a tenderness that anticipates the gospel.
- Even God's discipline is bounded by mercy; He announces 'her warfare is ended' (40:2) before the exile has fully come.
- 'Her iniquity is pardoned' (40:2) grounds all true comfort in real forgiveness, not in denial of sin, pointing to the cross where the debt is fully paid.
- Personal accountability stands behind this: Judah suffers for her own sins (40:2), not inherited guilt, consistent with Ezekiel 18:20.
- Biblical comfort is robust, not sentimental; it tells the truth about sin and then proclaims pardon.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God doubles the word 'comfort,' and what does that repetition tell us about how well He knows our weakness?
- How does it change the meaning of comfort that it rests on the news that 'her iniquity is pardoned' rather than on the trouble being ignored?
- Where in your own life do you most need to hear God say, 'your warfare is ended'?

Question 2

Student Question:

The comfort of 40:1–2 is anchored in the promise that 'her iniquity is pardoned.' Think about a burden of guilt or a hard season you have carried. How does it change you to hear God speak comfort to you not by ignoring your sin but by pardoning it, and where do you most need to receive that comfort right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

It is one thing to know that God forgives in general; it is another to let Him speak comfort to you personally. The heralds in 40:2 are told to 'speak tenderly to Jerusalem,' to speak to her heart. Many of us are far better at receiving God's commands than His comfort. We carry old guilt around like a stone in a backpack, half believing we deserve to keep carrying it, and we resist the very pardon God is eager to give.

The genius of biblical comfort is that it does not work by minimizing the sin. God does not tell Jerusalem her rebellion was no big deal. He tells her 'her iniquity is pardoned' (40:2). The sin was real, the discipline was real, and now the pardon is real too. That is the only kind of comfort that actually holds weight when life gets heavy, because it deals honestly with the truth rather than papering over it.

Think about the burden you brought into this room. Maybe it is a sin you confessed long ago but still flinch at. Maybe it is a hard season, a loss, a failure, a relationship that went sideways. God's comfort meets you not by pretending it did not happen, but by speaking pardon and peace into the very center of it. For the Christian, that pardon is sealed in baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4), where our warfare with God truly ends.

The invitation here is to actually receive what God offers, to let the doubled word land: comfort, comfort. Stop rehearsing the debt God says is paid. Let Him speak tenderly to your heart, and rest there.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God wants to 'speak tenderly,' literally to the heart (40:2); many believers must learn to receive His comfort, not just His commands.
- True comfort never minimizes sin; it pardons it (40:2), dealing honestly with reality.
- For the Christian, the pardon Isaiah announces is sealed in obedient baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4), not a mere feeling.
- Carrying guilt God has already pardoned is a quiet refusal of His comfort and an undervaluing of the cross.
- Resting in pardon, rather than rehearsing old debts, is part of mature Christian living.

Discussion Prompts

- Are you better at receiving God's commands or His comfort? Why do you think that is?
- What burden of guilt or grief have you been carrying that God may already have spoken pardon over?
- What would it look like this week to actually rest in God's comfort rather than rehearse your failures?

Question 3

Student Question:

Isaiah 40:3-5 announces, 'A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,' and the New Testament identifies this voice as John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ (Matthew

3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). What does it mean to 'prepare the way of the LORD,' and why does God insist that valleys be lifted up and mountains made low before His glory is revealed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 3 introduces one of the most famous lines in the Bible: 'A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God' (40:3). The image is borrowed from the ancient world, where road crews would go ahead of a visiting king, filling in valleys, leveling hills, and straightening the route so the royal procession could pass in honor. Isaiah pictures God Himself coming to His people, and a herald running ahead to prepare the road.

All four Gospels seize on this verse and apply it to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). John was the voice in the wilderness, the road crew of grace, preparing a people for the coming of the Lord Jesus. This is enormously important for how we read Isaiah. The 'way of the LORD' is not finally a literal road back from Babylon; it is the road God builds to bring His people out of sin and into the kingdom of His Son. The comfort of chapter 40 reaches its true height in Christ.

Notice what the road work requires: 'Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level' (40:4). Spiritually, this is the work of repentance. Pride must come down, the low and discouraged must be lifted, and the crooked life must be straightened, so that the Lord has a clear path into the heart. John preached exactly this, a baptism of repentance, to ready people for Christ (Mark 1:4).

The goal of all this preparation is glory: 'And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together' (40:5). In Christ, that glory has been revealed, the glory of God in the face of Jesus (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6). Isaiah is not forecasting a political restoration of national Israel or a rebuilt earthly kingdom; he is announcing the coming of God Himself to redeem His people, fulfilled in the gospel and the church, the true Israel of God (Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6-8).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Isaiah 40:3 is fulfilled in John the Baptist, by the explicit testimony of all four Gospels (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23).
- The 'way of the LORD' is ultimately the road out of sin into Christ's kingdom, not merely a literal return from Babylon.
- Leveling valleys and mountains (40:4) pictures repentance: pride humbled, the lowly lifted, crooked lives made straight.
- John's baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4) shows that preparing for the Lord requires a real turning of the heart, not passive waiting.
- 'The glory of the LORD shall be revealed' (40:5) is fulfilled in Christ (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6), not in a future political kingdom.

- The comfort of Isaiah 40 belongs to spiritual Israel, the church, defined by the cross (Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6–8).

Discussion Prompts

- How does it deepen your understanding of John the Baptist to see him as the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3?
- What does it mean, in practical terms, to ‘prepare the way of the LORD’ in your own heart?
- Why is it important to read the ‘way’ and the ‘glory’ of Isaiah 40 as fulfilled in Christ rather than as a political restoration?

Question 4

Student Question:

John came preaching repentance to ‘prepare the way of the LORD’ (40:3; Mark 1:4). What are the ‘mountains’ of pride or ‘crooked’ places (40:4) in your own heart that need to be made level so that the Lord has clear access to you? Name one honestly.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

If Isaiah 40:3–4 is fundamentally about preparing a road for the Lord into our lives, then the question becomes deeply personal: what is blocking the road in you? John preached repentance precisely because the human heart, left to itself, is full of obstacles to God, the mountains of pride, the valleys of despair, the crooked and uneven places of habit and self-deception (40:4).

Be specific about the ‘mountains.’ Pride is the great one, the part of us that resists correction, insists on its own way, and quietly assumes it does not need much from God. A mountain like that has to be made low before the Lord has clear access. Pride does not crumble in the abstract; it comes down when we name it and confess it.

Then there are the ‘crooked’ places (40:4), the patterns we have learned to live with, the small dishonesties, the resentments we nurse, the corners we cut. Preparing the way of the Lord means letting Him straighten what we have allowed to bend. This is not a one-time event but the ongoing posture of a disciple who keeps the road open.

The encouragement is that this leveling work is not something we accomplish alone by gritting our teeth. It is the Lord’s own work in a willing heart. Our part is honesty and surrender, to name the obstacle and hand it over. The reward is glory: the Lord coming near, clearing the road, and revealing His presence where the heart has been made ready.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The ‘mountains’ and ‘crooked’ places of 40:4 picture pride and ingrained sin that block the Lord’s access to the heart.
- Repentance, like John preached (Mark 1:4), is concrete and specific, not a vague good intention.
- Pride is leveled not in the abstract but by naming and confessing it before God.

- Preparing the way of the Lord is an ongoing posture for the disciple, not a single past event.
- The leveling is ultimately God's work in a surrendered heart; our part is honesty and yielding.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific 'mountain' of pride in your life that needs to be made low?
- Where have you grown comfortable with a 'crooked' place that you sense the Lord wants to straighten?
- What would it look like to keep the road open to the Lord as a daily habit rather than an occasional crisis?

Question 5

Student Question:

Isaiah 40:6–8 declares, 'All flesh is grass... The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever,' a passage Peter applies to the gospel (1 Peter 1:24–25). What is God teaching us about the difference between human frailty and the permanence of His word, and why is that contrast meant to comfort rather than frighten us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The herald in verse 6 is told to 'cry,' and he asks, in effect, what is there to say? The answer cuts to the bone: 'All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field' (40:6). In the dry climate of Israel, grass springs up green after the rains and then is scorched brown within days. Human life, with all its strength and beauty, is exactly that brief. 'The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it' (40:7).

But the sentence does not end in despair. It pivots on a glorious 'but': 'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever' (40:8). Everything human is temporary, but God's word is permanent. That contrast is the very thing that makes the comfort of this chapter trustworthy. The promises God is making to His exiles will not wilt like grass; they will stand when Babylon is dust.

Peter quotes this passage and tells us precisely what the abiding word is: 'And this word is the good news that was preached to you' (1 Peter 1:24–25). The enduring word of God that outlasts all flesh is the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we build our lives on that word, we are building on the one thing in the universe that will never fade.

This is meant to comfort, not crush. Yes, we are frail and our days are short. But we have been given a word that is not frail, a gospel that does not change with the seasons. The God who keeps that word forever is the God who has promised never to forget His people. Our security is not in our own staying power but in His.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Human life is genuinely frail and brief, 'like the flower of the field' (40:6-7), a sober truth Scripture does not soften.
- God's word 'will stand forever' (40:8); His promises do not wither like grass, which is why His comfort can be trusted.
- Peter identifies the abiding word with the gospel preached to us (1 Peter 1:24-25), so the permanent thing we build on is Christ's good news.
- Our security rests in God's unchanging word, not in our own strength or staying power.
- The contrast between fading flesh and enduring word is meant to comfort the believer, not to frighten.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the brevity of human life actually good news in light of verse 8?
- How does it steady you to know that God's word, unlike everything else, 'will stand forever'?
- What does Peter's use of this passage (1 Peter 1:24-25) teach us about where to anchor our lives?

Question 6

Student Question:

If 'the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever' (40:8), then your life is brief and God's word is permanent. What does it look like, this week, to build your life on the one thing that lasts rather than on things that fade, and where have you been investing yourself in 'grass'?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 8 sets up a stark choice about where we will invest our lives. If 'the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever,' then we are constantly deciding whether to build on grass or on the word. The trouble is that grass looks so alive and green in the moment. The applause, the bank account, the appearance, the achievement, all of it feels solid right up until the breath of the LORD blows on it.

Be honest about your own grass. Where are you pouring your best energy into things that, however good, are temporary? It is not that money, work, or reputation are evil; it is that they cannot bear the weight we tend to put on them. They were never designed to be foundations. When we treat fading things as permanent, we set ourselves up for the quiet panic that comes when the green starts to brown.

Building on the word that stands forever looks practical: ordering your week around worship and Scripture rather than fitting God into the leftovers; making decisions by what God has said rather than by what will impress; investing in people and in the kingdom, which last, rather than only in things that fade. Jesus said the one who hears His words and does them is building on rock (Matthew 7:24-25).

The good news is that you can repent of building on grass without despising the gifts of God. You simply move the foundation. You stop asking temporary things to give you permanent security, and you set your weight down on the word that will still be standing long after the flowers of this life have faded.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Verse 8 forces a choice between building on what fades and building on the word that endures.
- Money, work, and reputation are not evil, but they cannot bear the weight of being our foundation.
- Treating temporary things as permanent sets us up for fear when they inevitably fade.
- Building on God's word is concrete: ordering life around Scripture, worship, decisions, and the kingdom (Matthew 7:24-25).
- We can re-prioritize toward the eternal without despising God's good temporal gifts.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one piece of 'grass' you have been treating as if it were permanent?
- What would change this week if you genuinely built your decisions on the word that 'will stand forever'?
- How do you tell the difference between enjoying God's good gifts and trusting in them?

Question 7

Student Question:

Isaiah 40:12-17 piles up rhetorical questions: who 'measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,' and before whom are 'the nations... like a drop from a bucket' (40:12, 15)? What is the prophet doing for an anxious, exiled people by parading the sheer greatness of God, and how should the immensity of God reframe the size of our problems?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Having promised comfort, Isaiah now grounds it in the greatness of the God who makes the promise. He does this with a barrage of unanswerable questions. 'Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales?' (40:12). The picture is staggering: all the oceans of the world cupped in God's palm, the span of the heavens measured by the width of His hand.

Then He shrinks the great powers down to size: 'Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales' (40:15). To exiles cowering under the might of Babylon, this is breathtaking. The empire that seems to fill the whole horizon is, to God, a single drip left in the bucket, a speck of dust on a scale, too light to even register. 'All the nations are as nothing before him' (40:17).

He also reminds them that no one counsels Him or teaches Him: 'Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?' (40:13–14). The exiles might wonder whether God had run out of wisdom or strength. Isaiah answers: the God who needs no advisor and weighs the mountains like grocery items has neither lost His mind nor His might. Paul quotes verse 13 in Romans 11:34 to magnify the unsearchable wisdom of God.

The pastoral point is precise. Isaiah is not showing off God's size for its own sake; he is resizing the listeners' problems. When God is this large, Babylon becomes a drop in a bucket, and so does whatever empire of trouble looms over you. The size of your God determines the size of your fear.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's immensity is concrete: He holds the oceans in His palm and measures the heavens with a span (40:12).
- The mightiest nations are 'like a drop from a bucket' and 'dust on the scales' before God (40:15, 17).
- God needs no counselor; His wisdom is unsearchable (40:13–14; Romans 11:34).
- Isaiah magnifies God not abstractly but pastorally, to shrink the anxieties of an exiled people.
- The size of our God determines the size of our fear; a big God makes big problems manageable.

Discussion Prompts

- Which image of God's greatness in 40:12–17 most arrests you, and why?
- What 'Babylon' currently looms large in your imagination that needs to be resized next to God?
- How does it comfort you that the nations are 'a drop from a bucket' before the God who loves you?

Question 8

Student Question:

Isaiah 40:18–20 mocks the man who shapes an idol and bows to the work of his own hands. What are the modern idols you are tempted to trust, the things you 'fashion' to feel secure, and what is one you sense the Lord asking you to tear down?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Right in the middle of exalting God, Isaiah turns and mocks idolatry: 'To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?' (40:18). Then he sketches the absurd scene: a craftsman casts an idol, a goldsmith overlays it, a poor man who cannot afford much 'seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move' (40:19–20). The whole point is the ridiculousness of bowing to something you yourself just propped up so it would not tip over.

We smile at the ancient idol-maker, but idolatry has not disappeared; it has only changed clothes. An idol is anything we fashion and then trust to give us the security, identity, or peace that only God can give. For many of us the idols are money, career, the approval of others, our own competence, a relationship, a political hope, even our self-image. Like the carved god, they are things we set up ourselves and then anxiously prop up so they will not fall over.

Notice the irony Isaiah draws out: the idol has to be fastened down 'that will not move' (40:20), while the true God moves heaven and earth. We exhaust ourselves maintaining our idols, repainting them, defending them, propping them up, when the living God asks only that we trust Him. The idol drains you; God sustains you.

The honest question is not whether you have idols but which ones. What is the thing that, if it were threatened, would shake you to the core? That is a clue to where your real trust sits. The good news is that the same God who exposes the idol also invites you to come home to Him, the only foundation that will not topple.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Idolatry is exposed as absurd: bowing to an object you fashioned and must prop up 'that will not move' (40:19-20).
- Modern idols are anything we trust for the security or identity only God can give, such as money, approval, or competence.
- Idols drain us with constant upkeep, while the living God sustains us (40:18-20).
- A revealing test: what, if threatened, would shake you to the core? That often marks a real idol.
- Tearing down an idol is not merely stopping a behavior but transferring trust back to God.

Discussion Prompts

- What modern idol do you find yourself most tempted to 'set up' for security?
- What is the upkeep cost of that idol, the way it drains rather than sustains you?
- What is one idol you sense the Lord asking you to tear down, and what would replacing it with trust in God look like?

Question 9

Student Question:

Isaiah 40 climbs to a height in verses 21-26 and 28: God 'sits above the circle of the earth,' stretches out the heavens 'like a curtain,' brings princes 'to nothing,' calls every star by name so that 'not one is missing,' and is 'the everlasting God... who does not faint or grow weary.' Drawing these together with the way prepared in 40:3-5, how does the incomparable greatness of this God ground the comfort of the gospel, and why is it good news that the One who measures the universe is also the One who comes near in Christ to redeem His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter now climbs to its summit. Isaiah asks if his hearers have simply forgotten who God is: 'Have you not known? Have you not heard?' (40:21, 28). Then he unfurls a portrait of God so vast it can scarcely be taken in. 'It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain' (40:22). To this enthroned God, the towering rulers of the world are nothing: He 'brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness' (40:23).

Then comes the verse that has comforted the weary for millennia: 'Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing' (40:26). The God who flung the galaxies into place knows each star personally, by name, and never loses track of even one. The same God who runs the cosmos by name does not lose track of you in your exile.

And He does not tire. 'The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable' (40:28). The exiles felt forgotten, as though God had run out of strength or interest. Isaiah answers that the Creator never runs low. He is the everlasting God, inexhaustible in power and wisdom.

Now connect this to the way prepared in 40:3-5. The astonishing claim of the gospel is that this God, the One who holds the oceans in His palm, measures the heavens, and names every star, is the very One who came near in Jesus Christ to redeem His people. The herald cried, 'Prepare the way,' and God Himself came down the road, born in a manger, dying on a cross. The infinite greatness of God is precisely what makes the nearness of God in Christ such staggering good news. This comfort is not a forecast of a rebuilt earthly kingdom or a political restoration of national Israel; it is the announcement that the Almighty would come to save spiritual Israel, the church, those who are in Christ (Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8). The One who measures the universe stooped to measure out His own life for us, and reigns now at God's right hand.

So the greatness of God and the comfort of God are not two themes but one. Only a God this large can guarantee that 'her warfare is ended' and that His word 'will stand forever.' And only a God this loving would use that infinite power to prepare a way home for sinners. Behold your God: immeasurably great, and in Christ, immeasurably near.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God 'sits above the circle of the earth' and stretches out the heavens 'like a curtain' (40:22); His transcendence is total.
- Earthly rulers are reduced to 'nothing' and 'emptiness' before Him (40:23), a comfort to the oppressed.
- God 'calls them all by name' and 'not one is missing' (40:26); the God of the galaxies knows each of His people personally.
- The everlasting God 'does not faint or grow weary' (40:28); His power and wisdom are inexhaustible.

- The greatness of 40:12–28 is the foundation of the comfort of 40:1–11; only a God this great can keep such promises.
- The ‘way’ of 40:3–5 is fulfilled in Christ, in whom the infinite God comes near to redeem; not a political restoration of national Israel but the salvation of spiritual Israel, the church (Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6–8).
- Christ reigns now at God’s right hand; the kingdom Isaiah’s comfort points to was established at Pentecost (Acts 2), not deferred to a future earthly reign.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it comfort you that the God who names every star also knows you by name and will not let you go missing?
- Why is the infinite greatness of God the foundation, rather than the rival, of His tender comfort?
- What difference does it make to read Isaiah 40’s comfort as fulfilled in Christ and His church rather than as a future political restoration?

Question 10

Student Question:

Isaiah 40 ends with the promise that ‘they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles’ (40:31). Where are you most weary right now, and what is one specific way you will let the Lord form you through trusting Him this week, whether by waiting on Him, resting in the word that stands forever, or receiving the comfort of the gospel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah brings the whole soaring chapter down to earth with a promise about ordinary tired people. ‘Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for 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’ (40:30–31). The strongest among us run out of gas. But there is a strength available that does not depend on our reserves.

The key word is ‘wait.’ To wait for the LORD is not passive idleness; it is active, trusting dependence, the posture of the disciple who stops trying to power through in his own strength and leans his weight on God. The God who ‘does not faint or grow weary’ (40:28) gives power to the faint and shares His own inexhaustible strength with those who wait on Him (40:29).

Now make it personal. Where are you weary? Most of us are tired in specific places: a long illness, a hard marriage, a wayward child, a job that grinds us down, a sin we keep fighting, a grief that will not lift. Isaiah does not promise that the eagles never get tired in their own strength; he promises renewal to those who wait on the Lord in the middle of it. The renewal comes through trust, not through trying harder.

So the capstone question is simple and searching: what is one specific way you will let the Lord form you this week through trusting Him? Perhaps it is genuinely waiting on Him in a situation where you have been frantically trying to fix things yourself. Perhaps it is resting your weight on the word that 'will stand forever' (40:8). Perhaps it is finally receiving the comfort of the gospel, letting God say over you, 'your warfare is ended.' Lift up your eyes, behold your God, and let Him renew your strength.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even the strongest 'faint and be weary' (40:30); self-sufficient strength always runs out.
- Those who 'wait for the LORD' receive renewed strength (40:31); waiting is active, trusting dependence, not idleness.
- The God who never grows weary (40:28) shares His own inexhaustible strength with the faint (40:29).
- Renewal comes through trust, not through merely trying harder.
- Christian formation means letting the Lord shape us through concrete, trusting reliance on Him in our specific weariness.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most weary right now, and have you been trying to power through it in your own strength?
- What is the difference between passive waiting and the active, trusting waiting Isaiah describes?
- What is one specific way you will let the Lord form you this week, whether by waiting on Him, resting in His word, or receiving the comfort of the gospel?