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Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – February 23, 2021

The Lord be with you.

Do you ever feel like you're running on empty? I don't mean your car, but in your life where you feel like you're running on fumes perhaps not quite sure where you're going to get the power to keep going.

That's how some people I know are feeling after months of a pandemic, and then piled on top of that or the tragic headlines in the news recently. And then there's my friend, who's fighting a battle against cancer and he's feeling exhausted.

Where do we go to get the strength to keep going?

That's a question I've often had to deal with in my own life and ministry. Today, I've turned to a scripture that helps me when I'm looking for strength to keep going.

You might know the text as it is a favorite of many people. It's Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31 that talks about waiting for the Lord and finding strength and mounting up with wings like eagles. This favorite text is a message to God's people who were worn down after years in the Babylonian captivity, and they were feeling weak, guilty, feeble, helpless as they could not bring themselves to believe that God could possibly give them a new future. They were people were running on empty.

Let's first look at the context of our verse. And as Isaiah points us to the one who never tires who never gets weary. In Isaiah chapter 40 verse 28, it asks, have you not known? Have you not heard the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the Earth, he does not faint or grow weary his understanding is unsearchable he gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless even youths will fade and be weary, and the young will followed exhausted. Then here's our verse, but those but those who wait for the Lord, they shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they show walk and not think.

This phrase those who wait for the Lord. It is an important phrase in the Hebrew Bible as it is coded language for believers. As believers are oftentimes called those who wait for the Lord. It defines their faith that they're looking to the Lord for help. They are expecting



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deliverance. And salvation to come from the Lord, they're putting all their trust in him.

That's all bound up in this phrase those who wait for the Lord. The Hebrew word translated wait is the word Kuvah. We've seen this word before, because it's a big word in the vocabulary of faith as Kuvah means to wait or to look for with eager expectation. It's the kind of waiting, I did as a kid on Christmas morning, waiting eagerly for mom and dad to get out of bed so I could open my presents. So kuvah is not just putting in time, but it means looking for waiting with eager expectation for God to show up and to act on our behalf. It makes me think of a bird's nest I saw last spring, as there were these little baby birds and they were perched in the nest and their beaks were wide open and they were just yelling eagerly sure that mom was going to return with a worm for them.

And our text promises that those who wait, those who wait expectedly, eagerly for the Lord, they shall renew their strength. The Hebrew word translated renew, it's an interesting word, it's the word chalaph and it means to change or to exchange and as a result to renew, but the basic meaning is to change or to exchange one thing for another.

Let me illustrate. As in Second Samuel 12:20, it's used of David, who after mourning the death of his infant son, it says that David bathed he anointed himself, and then David changed or exchanged his clothes that is David gave up something old to receive something new. And God is promising, those who wait eagerly for him they change or they exchanged their weakness for God's strength.

This is what many Christian writers call the exchange life. As the Christian life is from start to finish, the exchange life, it begins as God exchanges our sins for the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God exchanges our death for the life of Jesus and the Christian life continues. As you and I, we get to exchange our weakness for God's strength, and that's why you and I can constantly say with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. With God, you and I, we are up for whatever life is going to throw at us.

So, Isaiah says, in our text said God gives power to the faint and He strengthens the powerless. In fact, God's power is oftentimes greatest in you and me when we are at our weakest. That is exactly what Paul was talking about in Second Corinthians 12, where Paul is struggling with this thing that he calls a thorn in the flesh and then God reveals to Paul, God promises Paul in Second Corinthians 12:9, he says, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. And then Paul agrees he says, For, whenever I am weak, then I am strong. In my weakness, I look to God. And God promises, those who wait eagerly, expectantly for him they shall exchange their weakness for God's power, and they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they will soar, they shall run and not be



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weary, they show walk and not faint.

You and I are never gonna be disappointed as we wait eagerly for God to work in our lives and as we exchange our weakness for God's power. So that I would join with Paul and praising God in Ephesians 3:20, now to him who by the power at work within us, is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way.

Thanks for listening, till next time..