

Fact Sheet for “Our Shrinking God” Isaiah 40:12-31

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Life can be filled with difficult challenges, problems, loss, risks, and fears. These can be very real and strike us at the core. Our sense of well-being and happiness can be shredded by them. Here's the danger if we allow that to happen. If we let our emotions about these grow and overtake us then something else shrinks... our view of God.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Job 38:1-42:6. Job has suffered unimaginable loss, but has kept his faith in God. However it is weakening and he begins to question the Almighty. Then God responds in one of the most majestic passages you will find anywhere in Scripture. It begins in Job 38:1 and ends in Job 42:6. Read those passages now.

Isaiah 40:12-31 comes very close to that passage in Job. God's people have suffered great loss, and would suffer more loss. But there was a difference... Job had not sinned, but God's people had sinned greatly. They had walked away from God's Law and followed idols. But God had not changed. The promise was that if they sought Him they would again find Him and His blessing. They would be overwhelmed by their situation and their view of God had shrunk. God would now encourage them to think correctly about Himself. This passage in Isaiah would then end with one of the most memorable verses anywhere in Scripture. As their view of God would grow... the fear over their situation would shrink. God began this way...

¹² 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
and the hills in a balance?

¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
or what man shows him his counsel?

There are three different words for measure used here. The first is a verb, the second is like a measuring cup, and the third can be seen in a different translation.

NAU **Isaiah 40:13** Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

¹⁴ Whom did he consult,
and who made him understand?
Who taught him the path of justice,
and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?

¹⁵ Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as the dust on the scales;
behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

¹⁶ Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him,
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

¹⁸ To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?

¹⁹ An idol! A craftsman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and casts for it silver chains.

²⁰ He who is too impoverished for an offering
chooses wood that will not rot;
he seeks out a skillful craftsman
to set up an idol that will not move.

²¹ Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
²² 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,
and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
²³ who brings princes to nothing,
and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.
²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows on them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

“circle of the earth” – See Job 26:10 and Proverbs 8:27 before reading another translation of Isaiah 40:22.

NET **Isaiah 40:22** He is the one who sits on the earth's horizon; its inhabitants are like grasshoppers before him. He is the one who stretches out the sky like a thin curtain, and spreads it out like a pitched tent.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
²⁶ 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.

NIV **Isaiah 40:26** Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God"?

NET **Isaiah 40:27** Why do you say, Jacob, Why do you say, Israel, "The LORD is not aware of what is happening to me, My God is not concerned with my vindication"?

²⁸ 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.
²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.
³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
³¹ 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.

Verse 31 is best known in the KJV. The NIV translates “wait” in a very good sense... “hope”. Another sense of the word is that of expectation.

From where do they renew their strength? Is it from their own reserves? NO! This renewing of their strength comes from the Lord (v. 29). This is both an emotional and spiritual uplifting.

There is a promise here. In the midst of your difficulties, challenges, problems, loss, risks, and fears wait upon the Lord. Turn your eyes, heart, and prayers heavenward. He can renew your strength. You can mount up with wings like eagles. You can again run and not be weary. You can walk and not faint. The Lord can strengthen you for what you have to face. It is God’s promise to you!