

HERE IS YOUR GOD

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS – (ISAIAH 40:1-31)

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, December 27, 2009, by Pastor Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

December 28, 2009

I. God delivers from a current situation vs. 1-11.

If you are familiar with Handel's Messiah, you will surely hear the music of that great oratorio going through your head as we read the verses of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. Handel chose the first verses of this chapter for the opening chorus of Messiah.

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.”

It is noteworthy that Isaiah's first emphasis is this wonderful word of forgiveness to Israel. The prophet seems to be carried forward in time to the occasion of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He is told to announce to the disobedient nation that the basis for their forgiveness has already been accomplished.

We need not be in doubt as to whose voice this is that is described in verse 3, for the gospels record that this is what John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, declared about himself. John announced that he was the fulfillment of this promise.

He said, *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said,"* (John 1:23).

Verses 3-8 define the ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord. He was to declare that when the Messiah came, his ministry would not only be one of reconciliation, but also one of reconstruction. He declared there would be a highway, built in the heart, for God to travel on.

In this beautiful symbolic language the prophet is saying that this is what God undertakes when he comes into our lives. When we have received his forgiveness, the next step is that he begins to change us, to reconstruct our lives. "Every valley is lifted up." In the low places of life, the discouraging times, times when you feel crushed and defeated, there will be comfort and encouragement from the Lord.

It is a word of reassurance as well. What is man? "All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field." All the great things we boast about will fade away and disappear.

All man's knowledge and power will amount to nothing. "The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; ... but the word of our God will stand for ever."

What a comfort that ought to be to us. Our natural strength will never accomplish what we want; human help will fail us. "But the word of our God will stand forever."

Verse 9 is a word of witness, a proclamation that always follows, never precedes the work of reconciliation, reconstruction and reassurance. A witness is one who talks about what happened to him. If nothing has happened to you, you do not have anything to say. If you cannot tell somebody of God's grace in your life, you cannot be a witness.

What a tender, beautiful scene is portrayed in that verse 11. But there are two portraits of God here. The God we proclaim is the God who is a Judge, with power and might to overcome all who resist him, all who attempt to deceive him or ignore him. But he is also a Shepherd. Those who cast themselves upon him he will nourish with tender care. Discuss these two portraits of God.

II. God delivers from a future situation, vs 12-26

This section has some of the most majestic and superb language about God found in Scripture. Listen to these words from scripture "*Can you do what I do? Can you hold the waters of earth in the hollow of your hand?*" God himself in majesty and greatness controls all the forces of earth.

As you read these verses there you will see the prophet asking questions that only God can answer, but these very questions shows us who God is. Meditate on each of the five questions in verses 12-14.

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Discuss how God views the nations as described in verses 15-17
2. Then discuss the questions that are asked in verses 18, 21, 25, 26 Even considering these questions tells us how our God can not only deliver us from current but from future situations as well.
3. How does God deliver, vs 27-31

Have you ever felt that God does not notice you, that he has no concern about your affairs? Have you felt neglected, forgotten, and thought that God does not care about you? We all feel this way at times. Here is God's answer. Wait! The hardest word to learn in the language for us to learn is "Wait". Let God work.

The Hebrew word has a note of expectation about it: expect God to work, wait in expectation that God will move. It takes time, you cannot have it overnight, but they that wait upon the Lord shall find their own strength renewed. They shall find their spirit mounting up like the eagle in its flight. They shall never be weary.

These verses give us hope. Without Hope we could not live. These verses assure us that our God is over our circumstances. He is the God of Hope.