

Recently a friend rang to check on my experience of a local medical specialist. Anticipating similar surgery for her husband she wanted to know. Did the doctor perform the surgery well? How was his bedside manner? What was the quality of the follow up? Placing our wellbeing in the hands of others is a big deal. Assurance of their ability to come through for us comforting. How much more when it comes to placing our entire present and future into the hands of the unseen God. Our question: is God up to the task of providing lasting comfort of depth and substance? Isaiah, prophet of the living God speaks of God's comfort in the opening verses of **ch40**. Our focus a fortnight ago. Isaiah spoke as the people of God surrounded by powerful enemies facing an uncertain, unknown future. A future including devastating military defeat, destruction of the temple, exile in Babylon. The foundation of God's comfort revealed in those opening verses: the people of Judah are God's people; forgiven people; people God brings home; people receiving God's eternal, reliable word of promise; people protected by the Lord's power, comforted with the tenderness of a shepherd. Foundations of great assurance of the depth, substance of God's comfort. The chapter continues as Isaiah anticipates the heart questions of God's people. In response Isaiah emphatically declares the ability and willingness of the living God to provide the comfort he promises. Brothers and sisters, how confident are you of God's power to comfort? To deal with that which brings sorrow and pain? To overthrow that which is opposed to God's people? Today's reading, God's word to the people of Judah. God's word to us. Finding its immediate application in the circumstances of the people of Judah. Defeat and exile. Speaking to a future beyond that, in a way that applies to all generations of believers. In **v12-31**, God reveals why confidence in him appropriate. Confidence in him over against self-confidence, confidence in others or human institutions and structures. Confidence built on the foundation of the majesty of God. On his greatness; his goodness. God's greatness revealed in three ways. **One**, creation. *'Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?'* **v12** God the majestic Creator. Holding the vastness of oceans and rivers in his hand. By contrast, only about 30 seconds of the recent rain fills the cup of my hand. This majestic God perfectly marks the boundaries between heaven and earth, land and sea. This majestic God holds all the raw materials of the earth in

a basket. I need more than one basket just for our weekly shopping. Even then I can't carry them all at once. The majesty of God revealed in creation. The people of Judah understand God is the Creator. They fail to grasp and live by its implications. The Creator controls, shapes, directs his creation. Even as it is distorted by the impact of human rebellion against his rule. Sisters and brothers, what is your understanding of God as the Creator? Is it robustly biblical or watered down by scientific theories of evolution that leave no place for a Creator God? Is your confidence in the Creator who controls his creation? Celebrate your confidence by turning your hearts to regular praise to the majestic God whose power is infinitely great. Jesus calming of the storm a vivid demonstration of that power. **Two**, knowledge. God's knowledge infinitely greater than the combined knowledge of the created world. No part of God's knowledge, insight, understanding comes from outside of himself. No teacher or counsellor responsible for shaping, adding to the insights of God. *'Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?'* **v13-14** Human knowledge, insight minute compared to the all-knowing, all-wise God. Human knowledge comes from outside of ourselves. Through the input of others. Brothers and sisters, our God knows the end as well as the beginning. His knowledge an assurance of his ability to provide comfort as we move toward that day when the whole of creation will bow before the Lordship of Jesus. **Three**, authority. This majestic God enthroned in the heavens. Sovereign ruler over the nations. *'He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,... 'He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.'* **v22a,23-24**. Seemingly powerful nations impotent in the face of his majesty and sovereign power. In this period of Israel's history. David's kingdom divided into two. Assyria, Babylon, Persia mighty then brought down. In our generations: British Empire, Nazi Germany, USSR, USA ascendant and declining. China remains under the control of our majestic God. Great assurance in troubling times. The bottom line in the biblical revelation of our majestic God. None can compare to his might and power. *'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?'* says the Holy One. **v25** The incomparable God deals with Judah's enemies. Directing the affairs of the nations who oppress them.

Exposing the impotency of man-made gods and puffed-up leaders of nations. The majestic God saves his people. Provides the comfort he promises. That comfort enriched by the truth this powerful God. Also the good God. The revelation of Scripture. His character and ways eternally good and consistent. His loving goodness poured out on his people. Whose hearts he knows. Whose needs he understands. Isaiah challenges God's people, *'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.'* **v28** Isaiah goes on to say, the God who never grows tired and weary gives strength to the tired and weary. Not wearied by his people's rebellion. During forty years of wilderness wanderings. The cycle of rescue and rebellion in the period of the Judges. Saul's failed kingship. He will not grow weary during Israel's exile. He does not grow weary in his comfort for you and me. Take these words to heart, sisters and brothers. Savour them. Rest in them *'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; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.'* **v29-31** Cling to him brothers and sisters. Trust him. Put your present and future in his hands. Even mustard seed size faith releases the empowering, protective strength of our majestic God. Strength to run the race in this troublesome life. To know the energy and freedom of the soaring eagle. Cling to him like our friend Peter. Confined to a wheelchair. Struck down by Motor Neuron's Disease at a relatively young age. Now walking and running with perfect lung capacity and movement of limb. In his heavenly home. Look forward to that day when you will join him. Experiencing the fulness of the perfect comfort of God. Cling to Jesus, the God of comfort. Who came to dwell among us in human flesh. Calling us who are weak and heavy laden to find our rest in him, now in this life and forever in eternity.