

Do Not Faint

by Mack Tomlinson

The sermon emphasizes the reality of spiritual fainting, God's perspective on it, and the way of renewal and strength through waiting upon the Lord.

Duration: 40:30

Scripture: Psalm 27:13-14, Ecclesiastes 9:11, Isaiah 40:28, Isaiah 40:30-31, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Hebrews 11:34, Hebrews 12:3

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

This sermon focuses on the theme of spiritual weariness and fainting, drawing from Isaiah 40:28-31. It emphasizes the reality of weariness in the Christian life, the various challenges faced, and the need to wait upon the Lord for renewal and strength. The message highlights God's promise to empower the faint and weary, encouraging believers to view weakness through a biblical perspective and minister to those who are struggling.

Transcript

Let's turn, in God's Word, to Isaiah chapter 40. I have been tired lately, and that's what I'm going to preach on. Isaiah 40, verses 28 through 31.

Isaiah 40, verse 28, the prophet says, 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 to him who has no might, he increases strength. Even the young ones shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted. But they who wait for the Lord, or wait upon 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.

I'm going to speak on that last phrase in this passage, speaking about the Christian, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40 is a majestic chapter about our majestic God. And it gives some of the biggest glimpses of great truths, like the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

And like Isaiah's cry, Behold your God. And when he says, All nations are as nothing before Him, tell that to the United Nations Monday morning. And he says, To whom will you liken God? One of the glories of

this chapter, 40, is that Isaiah shows the breadth, or maybe the great gulf, from the highest truth to the most intimate.

From God's sovereignty controlling the stars, the universe, the nations, right down to Him caring about the personal weariness of each of His children. That's an amazing thing to think about. There are so many different challenges and difficulties and obstacles in the Christian life.

It's no wonder that Paul, I read this week in the book of Acts when Paul was stoned at Lystra. And what did he do? It immediately says that he went and encouraged the various churches to continue in the faith. Imagine what he looked like when he stood up in those churches.

Bruises, stabs. He went and encouraged them to continue in the faith saying that we must, through much tribulation, enter the Kingdom. What kind of difficulties, all kinds, the Christian faces? Discouragement, loneliness, confusion at times about what is going on in your life where you don't have a clue, unbelief, pre-sin, doubt, mental, emotional anguish, physical tiredness, emotional weariness, opposition of others, criticism by others, disappointments, betrayal by people that you thought loved you and that you love, failures of others, chronic sickness, chronic problems.

If it's not one thing, it's another. Yet, there's one challenge the Bible speaks about so many times and that's our message tonight. In these four verses, fainting is mentioned four times.

Seven times if you include the word weary. Fainting, weary, spiritual weariness and fainting is a common experience among God's people. No one is exempt.

Some of you have come here this weekend in that condition. It was all you could do to drag yourself here in the weariness you've battled and then the long journey. I spoke to one brother at noon today and I said, you just drove in here? He said, yes.

I said, from where? He said, Edmonton, Canada. That's a journey. Denver.

Long distances. And so, weariness. None of us are exempt from it.

It can overtake any Christian. And when it does, it's like being under a cloud. It's like you can't escape it and you can't throw a switch to change it.

You're weary, you're exhausted, you're worn. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of this reality of fainting? Well, the word faint and the word weary mean simply the loss of strength. You come to the place where there's a loss of strength.

Mentally maybe. Physically. Fatigue.

Spiritual or mental. Physical or emotional exhaustion. Your supply is depleted.

Your ability to keep on and go on seems gone due to the hardness of life. Due to the demands. Martin Lloyd-Jones said in the last few months of his life, I'm tired of responsibilities.

And due to the hardness of life, due to the nature of the Christian life and all that the Christian life and service brings, spiritual weariness sets in often. As Solomon said about losing heart, if you faint in the day of adversity, then what? Then your strength is small. Strength gone.

Faith failing. Spiritually weak. Discouragement.

You begin to lose your heart. The Bible is full of examples. Remember Gideon.

Gideon and his 300 men. The Bible says, came and crossed over the Jordan. And it says, faint yet pursuing.

It was under Saul's reign in the day of battle that Scripture comments on the Israelites. And it says this little commentary, and the people were very weary. Once David had 600 men with him and they were pursuing the Amalekites, but 200 of his men remained behind.

They just stopped. You know why? Because the Bible says they were fainting, too exhausted to go on. Twice the Bible specifically shows that David needed the help of his brothers.

He was fainting and he was weary. And the Bible says, but Abishah helped him. Later, Jonathan went to David and the Bible says, Jonathan strengthened David's hands in God.

David needed that. We're reminded of David's classic statement in Psalm 27. Remember what he says there? I would have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I would have fainted. Jeremiah at one time was so discouraged and so sorrowful, he said in chapter 8, my sorrow is beyond healing and my heart is faint within me. Our hearts can feel exactly that way sometimes.

My sorrow is beyond healing. I won't get over this. I can't get over this.

This is too deep. I'm too weary from this. I'm so faint.

I'm so tired. Faint from sorrow and heaviness of spirit. Jeremiah cried, woe is me, for the Lord has added sorrow to my pain and I am weary with my groaning.

But Isaiah, who knew his share of sorrow and weariness, remember how he ended up dying. Tradition says that he was sawed in half and met his death that way. Isaiah was the prophet of good tidings here in chapter 40 because here he gives us a remedy for fainting.

Here he gives promises to those who are fainting and weary. What does Isaiah 40 tell us about this reality of spiritual fainting? Well, let's go back and look at it. First of all, we see in verse 28, he says this, The everlasting God fainteth not, neither is weary.

The first thing we see here is God never becomes weary. He is never in need like us of recharging. He's never in need of sleep.

All life is in Him and all life and strength and energy flows from Him. He doesn't need rest, sleep, or renewed strength. He's immutable, unchanging, unwearied, unaffected.

The Bible says in the Psalms, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. It's an amazing thought to think we were praying last night for revival and even this afternoon some prayers for revival. And I've often thought this thought, you know, the Holy Spirit could be poured out on New York City or Chicago or San Antonio and save everybody in the town and the Lord would not lack one less ounce of power than before He saved all of them.

His strength doesn't lessen. There's no change ever in His inner resources. Life isn't hard for Jehovah.

It's hard for you sometimes, but it's never hard for Him. He doesn't get tired. He doesn't get weary.

His strength never lessens. Rather, He shares out of His infinite supply of unending grace and provides for the weary one an antidote, a spiritual antibiotic, a healing, renewing balm to help the fainting, weak one. So, God never grows weary.

But look at verse 30. Next you notice this second truth. And that is this.

Spiritual fainting affects every age group. Verse 30, even the youths, even the young ones shall faint and be weary. If you're a young person here or if you're a new Christian, spiritual weariness may not be real to you yet, but it will be.

Probably sooner than you realize, sooner than you think. The longer you walk with God, the more you'll experience at times weariness and be really tempted to faint and give up. I'm too tired to go to prayer meeting.

I've worked too hard. I'm too tired to go to accountability group. And so, you begin to faint.

You begin to drop your guard. You grow weary in the battle and you lessen your choices. Even the young ones will be faint and grow weary.

And young men, the Bible here says, will utterly fall. The longer you're in the Christian walk, the more you will face tiredness and heartaches and disappointments. And every conceivable thing that will begin to drain your strength and produce in you weariness and the temptation to faint.

Spiritual warfare does that. Being hurt by others. Real disappointments in those closest to you.

Deep testings of faith. Chronic pain, physical pain. Day after day, week after week can just zap it out of you.

Can make you want to quit and give up. Family trials. Hardest things can come.

Personal tragedy. Grief and difficulties with children. Things beyond your control.

Draining demands. Unending demands of work and ministry that never stops without enough breaks. And the months wear you down.

And you aren't Superman. You're a weak man. And you're weak and weary and worn.

And then, big discouragements hit you because you're weary and you're tired. Like a mother's conversation with her son when he didn't want to keep going to church because people had hurt him. He said, mom, people are mean there.

They talk about me. They make me feel bad, so I'm not going back. She said, well, son, I have two reasons you're going back.

Number one, you're 40 years old. Number two, you're the pastor of the church. Being hurt by others can tempt you to faint.

Right? It can. It's very real. Even the youth shall grow weary.

Have you ever seen Christians, new believers that get converted and they get excited about the things of God? They get excited about church. And then a month, six months, a year into it, they have their first big wound by other Christians. And they get offended.

And they draw back. And they're discouraged. And they stop walking.

Even the young ones shall faint and grow weary. There's no age group that's exempt from this. You may be 80.

You may be 18. But spiritual weariness is an enemy. It's a temptation.

It's a battle you're going to face. And we must learn to deal with it biblically as Isaiah is showing us. Then verse 31 shows us another truth about this.

Verse 31 shows us the way of renewal and strength for the weary one. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. The way of renewal and strength.

God says point blank, this is the way of renewal. This is the path to strength. This is where you get it.

They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Those who learn to wait upon God, the weak then become strong. The fainting are renewed.

The weary do get refreshed. They're transformed into a strong climber, into a runner who can keep running, into a walker who can keep going and not quit and not give up. Even, Isaiah says, they mount up with wings like eagles.

They're going to soar. God does that when He renews your strength because you're waiting upon Him. They wait upon the Lord.

I remember about ten years ago, my daily Bible reading had become so inconsistent and I was battling it. Some days I'd read a chapter, maybe two. Other days I'd get busy and I wouldn't.

Then I'd feel guilty and then I'd feel discouraged. Then I'd feel empty. You know the cycle.

You know the routine. So I just got fed up and frustrated. And I said, okay, enough is enough.

I'm not going to try to make promises. I'm not going to vow vows. I'm not going to buy a new Bible reading calendar here at the Christian bookstore.

What do I do? Lord, help me. Give me new desire. Give me new hunger for Your Word.

Just give it to me. I know that's Your will. I'm asking You to change me inside.

Make me enjoy it as a feast. And I began to pray that every day and it happened. And it hadn't stopped.

They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength in whatever area you wait on Him. God promises this. Promised help.

Promised help. Renewal, new strength, new help, new grace waiting upon Him. What does it mean to wait upon the Lord? It means going back to the place of the Word of God in your life and being in it and reading

it and feasting upon it and praying it and renewing your mind to it.

Getting in it. It means the place of still communion with the Lord in prayer, being still before Him. Neglect breeds leanness of soul.

Neglect breeds weakness of mind. Neglect breeds dryness of heart, being still and knowing that He is God. Enter in your closet in your Father who sees in secret and who is in secret will reward you openly.

If you're used to weariness, what would a planned, regular, half-day or a whole day of 12 hours in seclusion in the countryside with a chair and your Bible and no phone? What would that do for you? In the country, a folding chair, your Bible, nobody else, alone, six hours, eight hours. What would that do for you? Why did Jesus so regularly withdraw and be alone? Because He needed to? To be with the Father, to wait upon His Father, to renew His strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

The weak become strong. The lame take the prey, Isaiah says. The Lord visits the weak and helps them with renewing grace.

Ecclesiastes 9, 11, I love this. The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but to the weak who learn to wait upon the Lord. Now the Bible exhorts us about this.

You know what it says? Do not faint. Don't do it. Don't faint.

Don't give up. Don't quit. Jesus said men are always to pray and not faint, not grow weary.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, since we have received this ministry of the Gospel and we've received this mercy, we do not faint nor lose heart. Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for we shall reap if we faint not. The Lord commended the Ephesians in Revelation when He says, I know your deeds and I know your toil and I know your perseverance.

And you have persevered for My sake and have not grown weary. You don't have to always continually grow weary. Your strength can be renewed.

So what are we to do, dear ones? What are we to do? We're not to faint. Do not faint. Do not lose heart.

How do we fight and resist fainting? Well, first, we have to view it biblically. That's why Isaiah 40, 28-31 is here. To view this biblically.

Fainting is a danger when God is disciplining you as a loving Father. The Bible says, do not regard lightly or despise the discipline of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected by Him. All discipline is loving, but it's not fun and games.

It's a challenge. It's hard. It can discourage you.

It can be sorrowful. It can be wearisome. So we're told, strengthen those weak hands and those feeble knees and do not faint.

How do we overcome fainting? Viewing it through the lens of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12, verse 3, For consider Him who endured the hostility of sinners against Himself, so that you will not become weary and faint in your mind. The New American Standard says so you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Consider Him who endured such. He endured the things far more than we ever will that would make us weary and want to faint. Consider Him, Scripture says, viewing it rightly.

If we lose sight of God in the battle of faith, we will certainly lose heart to keep fighting. When we lose sight of Christ as He is, we will certainly lose faith and heart for the battle. Consider Him in light of your weariness, in light of your fainting and your tendency to grow weary.

Christ is the remedy for this. Every translation reads, consider Him in the context of your weariness. His life and example.

His endurance. His tears. His pain.

His endurance to the end. Some of you, so many different things, some specific things, just zap you of your strength and bring you into spiritual weariness. And this is where God wants to meet you and change that and turn that weakness into a strength.

Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. The more Christ is our life, the more He is our focus, the more He is our lens through which we view weariness, the less we will have fainting spells and weariness battles. He ran well.

He endured weariness. He did not faint. We must look to Him.

We must cry out to Him. Psalm 107 says this, When their soul was fainting within them, then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He heard their cry and delivered them. Hope in His promises.

Face fainting with faith in your great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The fainting one who comes to wait on Him, a transformation will happen. God promises their strength will be renewed.

Look at verses 29 and 31. Here's God's promise to the fainting. He gives power to those who are fainting.

Who is a candidate for that tonight? What a wonderful promise. He will empower the weak and the fainting. He will strengthen the weary soul whose strength is gone and is poured out like the angels coming to strengthen the weak and weary Jesus in the wilderness.

At the beginning of His ministry. And in the garden at the end of His ministry. The Lord's ministry and His earth of life, the three years of His ministry were bookend by angels strengthening Him at the beginning and at the end.

In the wilderness, in the garden, they came and strengthened Him. Jonathan went to David and strengthened his hands in God. God will do that for you.

Trust Him for it. Ask Him for it. Cast yourself on His promises and on His loving heart.

He gives power to the faint. He will. And when He does, then verse 31 happens.

Suddenly, renewed strength. Rising up. You find yourself being lifted up.

You find yourself the burden being released. You find your mind suddenly being encouraged. And you don't know how it happened.

Because God has come. He comes and He helps you to run. And your weariness seems gone.

And you're getting your second wind. And you're walking and you're not fainting. They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

What are we to do? Not try to improve ourselves. Not try harder. Not be more sincere.

Not try to show God we're more committed. Now your job is weakness and waiting. That's all you've got to have.

Weakness and then waiting on Him. Get in the waiting mode as a weakling. He keeps our soul in famine and has not let our foot slip, Scripture says.

He will keep you in all your ways, Scripture says. Kept by the power of God through faith. The certain promise.

You shall run and not be weary. You shall walk and not faint. Lay hold of that promise, weary sister, weary brother.

It is the weak and needy that He helps and that He lifts up. Our Lord Jesus Christ is so kind and so gracious and so tenderhearted and so faithful and so willing and so ready and so available and so compassionate. He will come to you bringing help with Him when He comes to you.

Though my weary steps may falter and my soul a thirst may be, gushing from the rock before me, suddenly, trudging along, weary, tired, want to give up, but I'm keeping on, suddenly, gushing from the rock before me flow a spring of joy. I say, the Lord just speaks a word. He just touches you without you realizing it and suddenly, weariness is going away and something's happening.

He's helped me. He's become my salvation. The Son of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.

He will do this. Fear not. He says, I am with you.

I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

When you read what the Bible actually says to us about weakness and our limitations and what it means to be a clay vessel, you could certainly write a new hymn. What a friend we have in weakness. Sweet hour of weakness.

When we all become weaker, what a day of rejoicing that will be. For if we ever view weakness from God's point of view, from a biblical perspective, we will be a lot better off in our walking out the Christian life and in our usefulness. Weaknesses and limitations, we think they're bad.

God says they're good. We think they limit us. God says they prosper us onward.

We think they hinder us. God says they help us. We think our usefulness is lessened by weakness.

God says they humble us and they empower us more. Our weaknesses. Our limitations.

Fainting is rooted in our wrong view of weakness. God says my power is perfected in your weakness. So Paul says, therefore, think of what Paul says about this.

It's amazing. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses. For the sake of Christ, I am content with weaknesses.

I'm not yet. For when I'm weak, then what? Then am I strong. Meaning, when I'm experiencing weakness and I do wait upon Him and I view this biblically, that's when the power of Christ will help me to be strengthened so that I will know His power in my weakness.

Weakness is not a disadvantage. It's an advantage. It is not a liability.

It's an asset. Because it brings Christ's power to you that won't be there when you're self-sufficient and you've got it all together. Christian usefulness is not found in our having it all together or trying to make others think we have it all together.

No one has it all together. Every Christian has weakness. Every Christian has weariness at times.

We must know by experience what God promises. My power, He says to us, will be perfected in your weakness. So will you embrace your weakness? Will you be transparent with Me about it? And will you learn to wait on Me with that weakness that I can strengthen you in that weakness? Spiritual power is attractive.

Weakness is not attractive to us. But there's only one path to knowing God's power and that is going through weakening times. When it can experientially be less of you so that it can be more of Christ.

Better to have weakness in God's empowering than no weakness and no power. The weakness of self-strength or divine strength in your weakness. Christ will, He promises, strengthen you and make you endure to the end.

Make you strong out of weakness. He's able to make all grace abound toward you that you having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work. Our sufficiency is of God.

One of those little remembered triumphs of faith in Hebrews 11. Think of this. Verse 34 Who through faith were made strong out of weakness? That's an amazing thing.

Or it could read Who through faith from weakness were made strong or out of weakness were made strong through faith. Faith conquers weariness. Faith wins over fainting every time.

Now the last truth on this. Every Christian is to have a ministry to the fainting weary ones around them. You have this ministry if you're a Christian that's been given to you.

We like to hang around the strong ones, don't we? The New Testament tells us to hang around the weak ones. To have a heart for them. You have this ministry given to you if you're a Christian.

This is body ministry at its best, at its finest, at its most important. Lord, when did we visit You? When You did it to the needy and sick, to the least of these, You did it to me. Isaiah 35 verse 3 says, Strengthen those weak hands.

It's not talking about yours. It's talking about others. Strengthen those weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

1 Thessalonians 5 verse 14 Paul closing that book says these two little exhortations that we can just read over because we're getting out of the end of the book. He says this, Encourage the fainthearted and help the weak. How often do you do that? Every one of us.

Help the fainthearted, brother. Help the weakened sisters. Sister, here's a ministry to those fainting ones around you.

When was the last time in your church that you saw a fainting brother or a weary sister and it was you who strengthened them? Encourage the weak-minded. Help the weary. Like Jonathan to David.

Like angels to the Lord Jesus. Like the Philippian church to Paul. You to others who are too tired to go on.

Be a help to those while you're on the road to Zion to strengthen all those who need you. Do not faint. Wait on the Lord.

Isn't it a marvelous thing that the rest of your Christian life as you face bouts of fainting and weariness and tiredness, there's this remedy? They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They're going to mount up with wings like eagles. They're going to learn to run and not grow weary.

They're going to learn to walk and not faint. Amy Carmichael was born in 1867. She went to China in 1893.

She died in 1951 after being in China 58 years with no furlough. She never went home. But in 1931 at the age of 64, she became a physical invalid for the last 20 years of her life.

She went to examine this property that they were considering buying and in the darkness, there was a pit she didn't see and she fell into it and she fractured her back and several things were broken and she never recovered. And she was limited basically to her bedroom in pain. What did she do? Instead of self-pity, she exchanged a very active outward life of rescuing girls in India from temple prostitution.

They kept doing it. At the end of her fellowship, they continued to do it, but she was in her room. She was in bed.

She was limited to living in one room, a ministry of prayer, writing letters. From that point on in her life, 13 more books and many preparation of past books to reprint. And out of her weakness, she was made strong.

And in that weakness, she prayed this. Listen to what she prayed. Make us thy mountaineers.

We would not linger on the lower slope. Fill us afresh with hope, O God of hope, that undefeated we may climb the hill, seeing Him who is invisible. And let us die climbing, not fainting.

Are you going to die climbing, sister, and not fainting? Are you going to endure to the end, brother, persevering on, pressing on, being strengthened with the strength that He supplies waiting on the Lord and not fainting? Beloved, do not faint. Christ is with you. The Holy Spirit's in you if you're His child.

You have the exceeding great and precious promises of God. There is no excuse for fainting. Learn not to faint.

Learn to wait upon the Lord. And He will keep His promise as sure as He is true to strengthen the weary and the needy one. Let's pray.

Father, would You take Your Word and just apply it and make it real to us and let it transform many who this is their very need. They're fainting from weariness. Lord, You have strength and renewal for them.

So give us grace to wait upon You and believe Your promises, to lay hold. Lord, to believe God, we thank You for the blessed reality of Isaiah chapter 40 and what You say in those last verses. Lord, make it real to us.

Apply it to our hearts. And may, Lord, many this night, even after a long journey to get here, and there's weariness, Lord, do this for many we pray. Do this miracle of renewal and strength and encouragement rising.

Lord, lift some who have been faltering up on wings as eagles. We thank You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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