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SPEAKERS

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In 1776, and 1777, in England, there was a man named John Stocker, who wrote nine hymns and he sent them into a magazine called The Gospel magazine in England. We don't know anything about him except the town that he was born in, and that he contributed these nine hymns to this magazine. And one of his hymns is one a group has modernized. And the second verse of one of these hymns goes like this, "Without thy Sweet Mercy, I could not live here. Sin would reduce me to utter despair. But through thy free goodness, my spirits revive. He that first made me still keeps me alive." I love that, don't you feel that way sometimes of without his goodness, I could not live here. I would just be reduced to utter despair. The world's too much. Everything facing me is too much. Too much for me. Without the promises of God, I don't know, honestly, where I would be and probably you would say the same. I don't know where I would be without God's promises. Sin, and everything else, my weakness, my enemies myself. It would reduce me to utter despair. God's promises. They're, they're light in the dark for us. They're a kiss from heaven. They're solid rock under our feet. Without God's promises, I just want you to imagine what would your life be like? Just let me die. And so the promises of God, I don't have just an academic or a professional interest in them. You don't have just sort of an academic interest in them. They're the only thing that keep me from utter despair. Now all of God's children think the same thing when we're in our right minds when we're thinking the way that we're supposed to be thinking. Charles Spurgeon said God's promises are mines of wealth. armories of weapons, hospitals full of medicine, barns full of food, the Magna Carta declaring our freedom. The Tower of London filled with jewels. And all of them are sweet mercies to us. We need these promises. And they're all purchased on the cross. And now they come to us by faith. We saw that last week or last time that all of God's promises are yes and amen. They come to us. Because if God would not spare his own Son, how will he not give us all things that we need, and all those things are these promises.

And so this afternoon, let's look at another promise of God. Would you turn to Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah chapter 40. And my prayer, my hope is that this promise encourages you. Isaiah chapter 40, we're going to begin reading in the middle of verse 28, middle of verse 28. "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. 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." Well, verse 29, is the promise that I want to look at this afternoon. It is He that is the everlasting God, the Creator, the ends of the earth, who never gets tired. That's who who's who this is about. This is what he promises to do. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Now, here, here's a promise for me. Here's a promise for you - a precious promise. Weary? Oh, yes. Weak? Yes, that's me and the Lord says I will give you strength. I will give you strength. The ESV says - "He gives power to the faint. And to him who has no might, he increases strength." So weary. This is where we enter into the promise. This is where we connect with it. This is where it becomes precious to us. Are we weary? Are we weak? Faint? No might? And you say yes, that's me. Well, here's a promise for you. Here's a promise for you. Sometimes we feel like Elijah, don't we? After the show down at Mount Carmel, with the prophets of Baal and Ahab and Jezebel, you remember what happened? He ran, he flies into the desert, and he comes to a broom tree. And he sits down underneath it and he prays a very unusual prayer, he prays that he might die. Again, without thy Sweet Mercy, I could not live here. That's how Elijah was feeling. I just cannot live like this. Just let me die. He says, I've had enough Lord, take my life. I am no better than my ancestors. Where were Elijah's ancestors when Elijah was praying this? They were dried up in the ground somewhere - in a cave somewhere, completely spent. No life in them - skeletons in a cave. He says, that's how I am - no better than my ancestors. I'm spent. I'm as good as dead. I'm worn out. heart sick, weary, weak and faint. He was tired, weary, weak. Sometimes when I get tired, someone will say, "Hope you're tired in the work, and not of the work." And sometimes I just want to say I'm tired in the work. I'm tired of the work. Tired by the work and tired through the work. I'm tired for any preposition you want to put in there. I'm tired. Well, here's a promise for you. Here's a promise for me when we feel that way. I'll give you strength. Maybe you're a mom and the cares are just relentless. Relentless. Maybe your marriage is hard. And it's just the same things again, and again. Maybe it's your work. Maybe it's your ministry, even here and you're tired. And you look at the load in front of you that list in front of you. And you cry out, "This is too much. I can't handle this. I can't do this. I don't have what it takes." Maybe you've been facing a long trial. A long medical trial. You say I'm like that woman who was sick for 12 years and doctors couldn't help me. And there's no no remedy on the horizon. And you say I don't know how I can go on. I'm scraping the bottom of the barrel here. I'm down to that last quart of flour, down to that last pint of oil. Let's just collect some wood, eat our last meal, because I'm done. Maybe this weakness this weariness has been something that's gradually come upon you. Sometimes that happens, just the accumulation of things or carrying a load for a long time. And after a while you you realize wow I am I am tired. The hobbit Bilbo said to Gandalf, "I don't look it but I'm getting old, and I'm feeling stretched - thin. Like too little butter scraped over too much bread." Maybe you feel that way. Just not enough of you to go around and the part of you that is doing things, you just feel stretched thin. Well, here's the promise for you. Here's a promise for the weak and the weary and the spent and the fearful. He gives strength to the weary and he increases the power of the weak.

Now look at the verse, the verse before verse 28. Verse 28, has already said God is not like us. This is why we can have confidence in this promise. This is not a promise given to someone who doesn't have strength. This is not me promising you I will help you and give you strength. He's not like us. He doesn't grow. Look at it. He doesn't grow tired or weary. Because he doesn't grow tired or weary because he's the everlasting God, the Eternal God, he has life within himself, he never gets to the point where he feels like too little butter over too much bread, he has strength within Himself, he has all the power, he never runs out. And so for him to give you strength for him to give you power, it costs him nothing of his own. It doesn't diminish his strength in the least. It says he's the creator and sustainer of the ends of the earth. So he's holding up this whole Earth, the very ends and the very edges. So lift your eyes and look to the heavens, Who created all these? Who brings out the stary host one by one and calls them each by name? Because of his great power, and mighty strength, not

one of them is missing, not one of them disappears, not one of them, just burns out and in is no more, he holds the stars up, he holds the stars up night after night. And so he is strong, and a strong one. The God of creation, says I will give you strength, when the load is too much, I will give you strength. So you're faced with a ministry opportunity here at church, and you say, "I don't know if I can do this. I don't know. I don't know if I have enough to give." I don't know, maybe you've already agreed to it. And now the moment of that time comes in you you're called to do something and and you're fearful. And you're - "I don't know if I have what it takes to accomplish it." Let me just say Trust me, I've faced that 1000 times. Sometimes, not sometimes, every sermon feels impossible. It really is. Because the things that I want to see happen, the spiritual good that I want to do, I can't do. Jesus is right. Without Me you can do nothing. And so I would say yes, Lord, I, I feel that. So when you're there, what do you do? The very natural tendency is to just to rely on your own strength, and relying on your own strength looks like backing up. Retreating, saying no.

Peter tells us in his first epistle, Peter gives us the answer for us when when we're in that moment, when you're asked to do something, or when you're confronted with something, and you say I just don't have the strength to do that. Peter, First Peter Four, "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. And if anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides. So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen." When do we say to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever Amen? We say it when we have come completely weak and we we then rely on his strength we take from his strength and then we do it and then we give Him all the glory and all the praise. So how do we minister when we are weak? How How to Sunday school teachers and moms and dads and deacons. How do we serve when we are weak? We serve in the strength that he provides. So He gives us strength. And then we say to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. We only praise when we've previously trusted him and relied upon him and he came through for us and then we we say He is powerful. He gave me that strength, Paul in Colossians said I strive with all his energy that he powerfully works in me. So yes, I serve. Yes, I do it. I make that hard phone call. I have that hard conversation. I stand up. I say something, I do something. Yes, I serve. But where does the power come from? It's from him and I looked to him - It's his power. And he has no lack and he's promised it and so we hold him to it. That's what faith does. Faith holds God to His word. It's not blackmail. It's faith. Saying Lord, you said it. Now to it. We pray Isaiah 33:2 -"O Lord, be gracious to us. We wait for you. Be our strength every morning. Our salvation in the time of trouble." Our strength every morning. That seems to be an indication of every day needs. So we get up in the morning, I'm sure you have done this and do this. You wake up in the morning, and you face the same things. You're going to work, you're going to work again. And, and it's really from the outsider's perspective, it's no different than any other morning. It's the same people, it's the same job. It's the same situation. But some mornings, we feel our weakness more than others. And we say I've done this 1000 times. But I don't think I can do it again today. And so we pray, Lord, You've promised, you have promised that you would give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak, and so be my be my strength this morning. And then we swing our legs out over that bed, and we get up and we go, we trust him, Give me strength, and then we get up and go. Now there are times when we need strength to just keep going. Being hardy, doing the next thing, endurance, perseverance. And there are strengths for that - look down at verse 31. The very end - "They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Now verse 31 has two different kinds of situations where we need strength and the walking in the running. Those are just ordinary activities. Those are about moving forward. Those are about doing the things that we've done again and again. And so often that's the Christian life, it's just keep keeping on. It's just keeping on it's not spectacular. It's not immense movement forward, it is just a step after step after step. And to just walk is what the Christian life is. I think it was Eugene Peterson wrote a book about the songs of ascent from Psalm 120, to 134. Those are the

Pilgrims psalms that they sang as they went to Jerusalem. And it's a picture of our life as we go to heaven. And Eugene Peterson called his book on the songs of ascent, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. I really like that - *A Long Obedience in the same Direction*. You know, the Christian life is usually not spectacular, or particularly excruciating, challenging moments. It's about keeping on. It's about that long obedience in the same direction. He promises strength to keep us moving in that same direction. So moms, those challenges with the children, there's strength for that day, dads, whatever the situation ordinary things.

But there are, but there are times of special challenge. Is God only good for the ordinary days? We need Him for those ordinary days. But is that all he's is that only time he comes through? Well, there's promised strength for those moments when, when the moment is just too big. "They will soar on wings like eagles." That's not ordinary movement. That's extraordinary action. So moments that are just too big. The funeral for a 30 year old mother of three. That's too big. You can believe when I say I said I can't do this. This moment is too much. Or have you ever heard a finer sermon than when Pastor Jon preached Jose's funeral? People walked away. I remember Gordon Taylor telling me, "I do not know how he did that. I've never heard anything like that." Isaiah 40 Verse 29, has the answer. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. And so yes, there are times when God's people when we soar on wings like eagles. We do things that we could never do. And so they're not running that's flying. That's not normal. That's impossible. There are moments when God says, weak as you are, I will carry you. I will carry you. The first time this phrase "soaring on wings like eagles" is used. Is in Exodus 19. And it's talking about God taking this people out of Egypt. And they go to the other - now they're on the other side of the Red Sea. And they went from a slave people to a free people with their enemies dead behind them. And God says, I carry them. Like, like, I made them soar on wings, like eagles, I carried them like eagles. So there are moments when we are on the other side of the Red Sea. And we say, I have no idea how I got here. I have no idea how I did this. I know I have no idea how I made it through. And the Lord the ever-lasting God says, it was me. When you are weak, I was strong. And My grace is sufficient for you. So that's the promise. When do we do that? Well we bring - we bring our weakness to him. You bring your weariness to him. You bring yourself to him. "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." They will - that's a promise we need to take in - that's a promise we need to believe. What a good God and and what a kind promise. You don't have to despair. There is strength. There's promised help for you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this promise. I pray that You would give us faith to believe it. Faith to put our hope in you. Pray that this week when we do feel overwhelmed. When we feel weak, that we would you would you would bring to mind this promise and help us then to trust and to act. Help us not to rely upon our own strength. Your Pleasure is not in the horses in the strength of men, but you delight in those who fear your name and trust you so let us be those kinds of people this week. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.