

Focus on Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 November 2022

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 0 0] All right, let's begin this morning by looking at a promise from God's holy word. Let's look at Isaiah chapter 40 and verse number 31.

Jeremy mentioned that we sang a song about that, that last song that we will wait upon the Lord. He will be there for those in their time of need.

Isaiah 40, 31 says, but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Now, who wouldn't like their strength renewed, right?

As we go through the day, it just seems like life sucks the vitality out of us. It just seems like as we go through our daily life that, you know, life is so daily.

You know, I've heard someone say that. The things that we have to do, they just, it goes on and on and on. And the constant demands of life can simply wear us down.

[1 : 0 3] Now, this verse, Isaiah 40, 31, is not where we're going to spend the bulk of our time this morning. We're going to come back to it at the end. But I'd like to unpack a couple of things from this verse this morning.

As we see in verse 31, it says, but those who what? Those who wait upon the Lord. Now, the word wait here in Isaiah 41 does not suggest that we just simply sit down and, you know, we twiddle our thumbs and do nothing.

This word wait has, carries with it the idea of expectant hope. How many of you watch baseball? And I don't have to ask Cindy that question.

She's such a huge Astros fan. Just look at her purse. But when you see a play taking place and there's going to be, we know, a runner to first.

The ball is hit. And what is that? The ball is hit into the infield. What is that first baseman doing? He's got his foot on the base.

[2 : 1 8] He's got his glove. What? Why did they choose tall people for first baseman? They got a lot. They got longer arms, got longer legs. And so the ball will reach them sooner. And so are they on first like this?

You know, like, okay, I'm waiting for the ball to come. Come on, just throw it to me. No, they're expectantly waiting for that ball and their glove is out ready to receive it. And that is the idea that Isaiah has when he says, but they that expectantly hope and wait on the Lord to accomplish his promise, to accomplish what he is going to do in our life.

So those of us, as we're going through and as life is just sucking the vitality out of us, and as we are getting tired and weary of this, just the daily grind as it's been called, God's word says, but they that expectantly hope on God to provide what they need are going to have what happen in their life.

They shall what? Their strength shall be renewed. And that word renew here, it's been translated renew, but the original word could also be translated to exchange.

And so it's like you have old, dirty clothes on. And what you do is you exchange one set of clothes for a new set of clothes or another set of clothes.

- [3 : 58] So we exchange our weakness for his power. So we wait on the Lord. We're expectedly waiting for God to do his thing.
- And then when he does, he's going to take our weakness and he will exchange it for his strength. You remember 2 Corinthians chapter 12, when the apostle Paul talks about his thorn in the flesh?
- Now he has to live with it. God said, no, I'm not taking it away because it's going to serve a purpose in your life. So what was the apostle Paul's attitude toward that disease, sickness, eye trouble, whatever it was?
- He said, when I am weak, finish it with me, that I'm strong. So what Paul is saying, in my weakness, God takes my weakness and he exchanges it for his strength.
- And so they that wait expectantly upon the Lord shall have their weakness exchanged for God's strength and their strength will be renewed. So as we wait on God and as we trust God, he will enable us to soar whenever there is a crisis in our life, to run when the challenges are many and to walk faithfully day by day in the daily demands of our life.
- [5 : 24] You know, it's much harder to walk in the ordinary pressures of life than it is to fly like an eagle in times of a crisis. You know, in the times of a crisis, you know, that's when we really depend on God.
- That's when we really cry out to him and say, God, I need you. But it's in the daily ordinary pressures of life that it's more difficult for us to bear up under the weight of the pressures of life and to wait expectantly on God for him to do what only he can do.
- William Carey, the father of modern missions, said this. He said, I can plod. I can plod. That is my only genius. I can persevere in any pursuit.
- He said to this, I owe everything. You know, it's been said the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. You want to get a place on the other side of the globe?
- Well, you've got to begin. You've got to start the journey. We can dream about it. We can talk about it. But it won't happen until we take that first step. See, the greatest heroes of the faith are not always those who seem to be soaring and accomplishing great and mighty things.
- [6 : 52] I think the great heroes of the faith are those that are just simply plodding along, trusting God, walking in faith, and the strength that God can provide them.
- You know, how many times have you heard the phrase, focus on the fundamentals? Focus on the fundamentals. You know, if you Google that exact phrase, if you Google, in quotes, focus on the fundamentals, you Google that exact phrase, you get 209,000 results.
- That means 209 million. That means 209 million times somebody has used those words to write about focusing on the fundamentals.
- Believe me, I tried it. That's what I did this week when I was preparing for this message. I Googled, focus on the fundamentals, and it came up 209 million results on this phrase.
- You know, this phrase is common because it's something that we all understand. If we want to be good at something, we need to focus on the fundamentals. If we need to stay being good at something, we need to apply that all the time in our life.
- [8 : 11] Because when we lose our direction, when we lose our focus, it's time to get back to that which helped us or got us to the point where we were. And so we find ourselves from time to time in situations where it might be necessary for us to say.
- Maybe situations in our Christian life where we find it necessary to say, you know, for me, I need to begin focusing on the fundamentals again.
- That's the title of this morning's message. Focus on faith. Focus on that daily faith that it takes to live the Christian life. Getting back to the fundamentals.

Re-evaluate my priorities. Re-evaluate my passion and reclaim the purpose that God has placed on my life. In 1960, the Green Bay Packers season ended on a disappointing note.

They were playing the Eagles for the national championship. And they gave up a lead late in the fourth quarter, ending up losing the game.

[9 : 20] During the offseason, Coach Vince Lombardi, he realized that his team had failed to focus on the fundamentals of the game.

So Lombardi started the next season. And I have a certain affinity with the Green Bay Packers. From 1956 to 1971, a certain guy played for Green Bay Packers as quarterback, Bart Starr.

And so I always had an affinity with the name. Ended up being coach. So in 1960, and starting the following season, Lombardi started off the season by holding up a football in training.

And this is what he said. Gentlemen, first things first. This is a football. Now we talk about getting back to the fundamentals.

Lombardi decided he needed to get back to the fundamentals. Now, the Packers was Lombardi's very first professional coaching gig.

[10 : 27] He had coached at high school level before as head coach. And he had been, I think, a minor coach on another team or for another team.

So Lombardi starts them back on the fundamentals. And Lombardi became a winning coach. As a matter of fact, George Hollis, who was coach of the Chicago Bears for 40 years, said this about Lombardi.

He said, you might reduce Lombardi's coaching philosophy to a single sentence. In any game, you do the things you do best. And you do them over and over and over.

Lombardi didn't surprise or confound you. He simply just beat you. So what was Lombardi's strategy? It wasn't running long Hail Marys.

And it wasn't doing these out of the box. He wasn't very creative. Hollis and other coaches said Lombardi just stuck with the fundamentals. He did what his team was best at, and he just did it over and over and over.

[11 : 35] And he plodded along until he beat one team after another after another. How do we walk the Christian life? We just do what God's told us to do. We do it today.

We do the fundamentals, and we do it tomorrow. And we do it the day after. And we do it the day after. So this is the approach we're taking. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a Bible. You know, I've heard it said that the Bible stands for basic instructions before leaving earth.

You know, that's an acrostic. You know, somebody just came up with that. But I think that that's true. God left us with the instructions on how to live before we leave this earth.

And in order for us to focus on the fundamentals, we focus on what God has told us to do. You know, they'll mount up with wings like eagles, verse 31 says.

And they shall run and not be weary. So the fundamentals. They shall walk and not faint. So our faith starts with a walk.

[12 : 40] I mean, that's at its most basic. You know, we hear that term often when it comes to our faith. And that's why we're going to begin here this morning. What does the word walk tell us?

When you hear the word walk, what comes into your mind? You know, it's a regular process. You put one foot forward. You take another step.

You take another step. And you take another step. So for our daily walk in our Christian life, it is a daily process. You know, there's nothing once in a while about it.

It's a daily thing. It's not an on-again, off-again experience. It's a day-by-day process. But it's also a day-by-day progress.

Because when we walk, it takes us from where we are to where we want to be. And that's what a walk is about. We move so we can get somewhere.

[13 : 39] And our daily walk in faith is a process. But as we daily walk in our faith, we are to be making progress. We are to be coming more and more like Jesus.

We will be one day closer to when Jesus returns. So how much time do you spend in prayer? How much time do you spend reading God's word?

How much time do you spend in your quiet time with God? Catherine and I have begun listening to immerse the reading Bible on audio.

It breaks the Bible into manageable sections, gives an in-depth explanation before each book and before each section of books in God's word.

And in turn, the printed format of immerse the Bible reading plan or the reading Bible, it is divided into six volumes.

[14 : 44] But it's printed the way the original Bible authors wrote it. There are no headings and there are no chapters and there are no verses. So in paperback form, it's the Bible written like a non-fiction book.

And so you start with New Testament, Matthew. And it just reads with no headings and no chapters and verses.

So you're reading it like it was originally written. Believe me, it's a refreshing experience reading God's word and hearing God's word like that.

And if you're interested in finding out how to get your copy, let me know and I'll tell you how. But the Christian life is a daily thing. It's a daily walk.

And as we said earlier, the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. So let's take a look at a verse from God's word. Galatians 5.25 says, If we live in the Spirit, let us also do what?

[15 : 48] Walk in the Spirit. The focus on the fundamental principle is to remember that your faith is a daily event. That walk in the Spirit that we need to look at and we need to measure it daily.

And if our faith is a walk that's measurable, growing, and ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ, then it's something that we need to be concerned about.

And it's something that we need to be involved in. So it's growing and it's an ongoing relationship with Jesus. Micah 6.8.

Micah 6.8 says, He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord does require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to do what?

Walk humbly with your God. Now this is the primary reason why the early days of your faith walk is so exciting.

[16 : 51] You know, things don't get in the way. Because everything is so new to you. And you know, you're on fire and you wanted to learn. And it was a priority.

And it may be for some of you still a priority in your life. But somehow along the way, we lost sight of the fact that our faith is a journey. It's not a sprint.

It's not learn all you can and just kind of coast the rest of your life. Our faith is a journey. 1 Peter 1, verses 17 and 18.

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.

Now the message version puts it this way. Knowing that you are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct received by the tradition from your fathers.

[17 : 52] Same thing. He says that we are to stay here as we're on this earth. As we are here, we do what God wants us to do.

Now this is the message. Your life is a journey. You must travel with a deep consciousness of God. It costs God plenty to get you out of that dead-end, empty-headed life you grew up in.

So he says the same thing, but in ways that we understand that we were taught a lot of things maybe growing up, but were they truly God's Word?

Was it truly what God wanted us to know? You see, God paid a price for us. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary. There was a price to pay because of our sin.

See, there's also a price to pay for us personally. Now it's not paying for our sin, but when it comes to our journey, just like the Apostle Paul tells the Philippians in Philippians chapter 2, verse number 12, he says, work out your own salvation.

[18 : 54] What does he mean by that? We're saved by grace, but we've got to live it out. We've got to trust God every day of our walk. We've got to live for God every day of our walk. We've got to be engaging in the fundamentals of the faith, the disciplines of the faith, Bible reading, prayer, evangelism, sharing our faith, all of these things.

You see, the good news for us as a believer is we know our destination. We know where we're going. We know where we're to be walking. Before the advent of GPS, sometimes you leave on a trip and you're not really sure where you're going.

But even in today's time, you have to be smarter than your GPS because sometimes it wants to take you off on some little trails because they had planned a road there, but they never built the road. And so it maybe sends you out into a field or it sends you to the middle of a lake.

That's why they have these warnings on your GPS. But we know that God's word is true. It's inerrant. And he tells us the path that we're to go.

So it doesn't take away the fact that along life's journey, there are going to be some hardships. There are going to be some difficulties.

[20 : 12] There may be some problems. Peter shared this when he wrote 1 Peter 4, verse number 12. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you.

Now, there are setbacks. There are struggles. There are roadblocks. There are going to be discouragements in our life. And the list goes on and on and on. But these hardships, these things can be looked into our life.

I mean, we have people here who have been living through hardships after a hurricane. I mean, we have two families here that have been displaced out of their home for almost going on three years, right?

And some are hoping to move in soon. You see, we can look at all of our hardships. We can look at all of those discouragements and all of those struggles and turn them into times where we lean on God and we can really see God at work in our lives.

Look at 2 Corinthians 4, verses 16 through 18. 2 Corinthians 4, verses 16 through 18.

[21 : 31] Therefore, we do not lose heart, Paul says, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

For our light affliction. Now, you might look at your problems and say, God, these aren't light problems. This is heavy stuff. This is life and death kind of stuff.

But Paul says, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment. We're only on earth for just a certain period of time. Yesterday, last evening, we've normally been listening to our immersed reading Bible plan when we're eating.

And so we have this going. And last night, we were going through Genesis and how people lived, you know, that there were so many who had children so young in life.

You know, there were 120, 150, and 300 years old and lived to be 800 and 900 years old. What must have been like to live almost a millennia?

[22 : 39] I can't imagine. 70 years, 80 years seems like a long time. But Paul says, when we look at things in the light of eternity, he says, it's just like a moment.

He said, what they're doing is those problems, those troubles, those afflictions, they're working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Doesn't this remind you of Isaiah 40, 31? That our inner man, our inner being, our spirit is being renewed every single day. The mercies of God, they are new every morning, the Bible says.

And so we're being renewed day by day. You know, it would be easy to lose heart if we simply looked at what we saw on and saw only what's here.

But God wants us to see the things that are not yet to see faith. Bible church operating by faith, fueled by prayer.

[23 : 45] Prayer warriors, evangelizing our community with the gospel of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ, and serving in such a way that if we cease to exist, then the community would miss us greatly.

Do you see it? You say, well, I'm not seeing it yet. Well, Paul says, by faith, we walk by faith, not by sight. We see things that are not yet. And we know that God can accomplish it to see us operating by faith, fueled by prayer warriors.

I made that request a couple of weeks ago, and I'm still waiting. If you feel God saying that you need to be a prayer warrior, that you need to be praying for me as pastor, you need to be praying for our body of believers.

We need to be praying and being a prayer warrior. Please let me know. We will give you things to pray for. We will give you a prayer list. And we need people praying daily.

We need people praying for what God is wanting to do all around us, because we don't need to fix our eyes on what's seen, but on what's unseen, things that we haven't seen yet.

[24 : 54] And Paul's sharing here that we are on a journey. It can sometimes lead to hardship. But as we focus on the fundamentals, the principle that we need to remember is that God is in control of the journey.

God is in control. God is in control. And he already has our destination in mind. And then, finally, our faith is a race.

Our faith is a race. Look at 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 24. 1 Corinthians 9, 24.

Paul says, Do you not know that those who run in a race all run? But one receives the prize.

Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Now, the thing about the Christian life, the thing about the race that we're running is, guess what?

[25 : 54] We're all winners if we finish. We're all winners. If we go through this life, our daily walk, we're walking by faith, we're focusing on the fundamentals, and it has been a daily walk.

We grow and grow and grow and grow more like Jesus Christ. We're going to get to be with God for eternity. And later in that passage, this is what Paul wrote. He says, So I run with what?

Purpose in every step. What's Paul saying? Every day that I get up, I've got a purpose. My purpose is to win the lost. My purpose is to share the gospel.

My purpose is to evangelize the world. That was Paul's purpose. And think about it. That is our purpose. God left us on earth to share the good news of the gospel.

And like what we're hearing in the book of the Revelation on Sunday mornings in Sunday school at 915, is no one will want to experience the wrath of God that will be poured out on this planet.

[27 : 02] So this is our opportunity to trust Christ. And this is the opportunity that we have in our lifetime to share our faith and bring as many people with us to heaven when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back.

See, life's a race. And Paul said, I'm running so I can finish it. In 1912, marathon runner Shizo Kanakuri was chosen to represent Japan at the Summer Olympics in Stockholm.

He began the race with the rest of the runners, but along the way was overcome with heat. And he stopped at a garden party along the way, and he stayed just a little bit too long.

He stayed for over an hour. And Shizo thought it was a little bit, he thought it was too late to get back into the race. So what did he do? He took a train to his hotel, found the boat going back to Japan, and went back home.

And for more than 50 years, the runner Shizo Kanakuri was listed as a missing person in Stockholm. So he spent all of these decades just quietly living his life back in Japan.

[28 : 15] And then 54 years later, in 1966, the Swedish public television network called him with an offer.

They had heard about his story. They had finally found him. And so this is what they offered. Would you like to finish the marathon? Think about that.

54 years later, the television studio, the television broadcast company calls and said, we finally found you. We heard that you didn't finish the race. Would you like to finish the race?

And so the 85-year-old Kanakuri accepted the offer, and he traveled to Stockholm, and he finished the race that he had started so many years before.

This time, as he crossed the finish line, his final time was 54 years, 8 months, 6 days, 8 hours, 32 minutes, and 20.3 seconds.

[29 : 17] But he did what? He finished the race. You know, there may be times in our Christian life where we might coast for a while, or we may say, you know what?

I quit on church. I give up on God. And then something happens, and we say, God, forgive me.

God, I'm ready to get back in the race. And we get back in the race. And guess what? Everyone's a winner in God's kingdom.

If we belong to Jesus Christ, we're all going to be spending eternity with him. And we'll get to finish that race. So our goal is not just to walk daily.

Our goal is to not just start the race. Our goal is to finish. So if you stop training daily, if you stop reading God's word daily, if you stop studying daily, if you stop praying, or maybe you think you've lost your way, you know, it's time to make the decision to get back on the track and to finish the race.

[30 : 22] You know, your time might be like Kanakuri's 54 years later, or 60 years later, 20 years later, 5, whatever. Finish the race.

Paul said it this way, verse 24 of Acts chapter 20. But none of these things move me. All of the things he had to experience because he followed Jesus. Nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul said, none of these things that I am. I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He said, I was a big guy in Israel.

But he said, I don't count any of those things. He said, because the most important thing to me is Jesus Christ. And 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 6 through 8.

For I am already, he's writing to young Timothy, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

[31 : 38] This was later in Paul's life. He knew that his time was running short. He was older. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the race.

And he says, finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day.

And not to me only, but to whom? Everyone, to all who love his appearing. So, the focus on the fundamental principles that we need to remember is that we're in this race to win this race.

The Christian life's not a sprint. It's a marathon. You know, we don't just start off full speed ahead and expect to always be that way.

We're going to have mountaintop experiences. We're going to have valley experiences. We're going to be down at the dumps. We're going to be encouraged. We're going to be discouraged. That's life. But it's a marathon.

[32 : 42] I know you might have gotten overheated and maybe hung out for an hour or so, but guess what? Get back in the race and finish the race.

It's never too late because we're here to finish. It's a day-by-day-by-day process. And think about it. Who are we competing with? No one, really.

Ourselves. Because God has given each of us a potential. God has given each of us a reason to be on the earth. He's given us the giftedness that He's given us.

And we are here to carry out that plan for our lives. So our challenge, the best part about your faith is, our faith is there's a biblical promise.

And that goes with it. Isaiah 40, 31. For those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They will run and not grow weary.

[33 : 45] They will walk and not faint. See, they will soar high. There's an adventure in your faith journey. They will run and not grow weary.

So we run the race to win the race. And it's the race only you can run. Because it's your life. And it's the race that God has given you. They shall run and not grow weary.

Or they will walk and not faint. It's your daily, day in, day out, walk of faith. Vince Lombardi told his guys, this is a football.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Bible. This is our guide and only authority for our faith and how we practice our Christian life, following Jesus as our Lord and our Savior.

How do we get there? Well, number one, by trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior. Trusting in Him alone and what He did on the cross for us. And by trusting in the Lord, by waiting patiently on Him, we will find our strength.

[34 : 57] He'll renew our strength. So remember, focus on the fundamentals because this is our faith. Let's pray. Our precious Heavenly Father, we're so very thankful for what You've done in our lives.

We thank You, Father, for accomplishing Your will in our lives. And we pray, Heavenly Father, that You would help us to walk daily as we're trusting You, as we're waiting on You, and we're allowing Your Holy Spirit to guide us, to lead us, and to empower us.

Father, we thank You for this offering that we are about to receive. Use it to accomplish Your will and Your plan on this earth. And as we give back to You what belongs to You and how You have blessed us, Father, may we be able to bless others as well.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's all stand this morning. for you in Jesus' name.

Let's all stand this morning, if you are threatened to take us away and step through what esperar we have and see you said is this morning people that are coming to you and that's how you get back to death today. Let's all stand this morning for this morning, so stand this morning because we never have hope for you.

[36 : 13] I work for your heart until the end of dawn is so encouraging this morning and I'm so difficil about you And I call you about you forOUR anything, how you will go to you put your heart on the most and I'm through for you