

How can I discover the stability of God for my life?

Isaiah 51:1-8

Things can get rather grueling at times, we all know that. The following were stories that appeared in the same news paper I picked up last week: In Bombay, India, at least 42 people died and 38 were injured when a portion of a hill collapsed on an area of slums after more than 24 hours of heavy rain.

According to the UN, the virus that causes AIDS is now the largest crisis facing the world's children. More than 10 million children have the HIV virus.

Coroners remove one of six victims of a multiple murder from a home in Ontario, Canada, a few days ago. An entire family--two parents and their four small children--were slaughtered.

100's of people die as a result of a 7.5 magnitude earthquake in Turkey

Three bodies were discovered a week ago in the wreckage of a pair of collapsed residential buildings in Brooklyn, New York. Hundreds of families were left homeless.

Occupy Wall Street movement has been clashing with police all over the US. It has spread throughout the world, there is rioting in the city of Lima, Peru. Six people are dead in clashes with police.

More than 2 million lose power during this rare October snow storm. 3 people are reported dead; states of emergency declared across Northeast.

And I could go on and on and on. Anybody here today want to dispute the fact that things are rather unstable in this world. But the truth of the matter is that they are rather unstable even a little closer to home. In just the past month, I spent time with people facing serious and life-threatening illnesses. And some of those I visited didn't make it. There are fresh graves not far from here. I counseled with people who are dealing with broken hearts and broken promises; and some with broken relationships. There are those who are dealing with financial instability: the debt collectors and the constant bills are like a dark hole that just gets worse with each day. I talked with one man who wants to just run away and hide because of all of the instability in his family, and on and on I could go. But in the face of that instability, I have a word from God for you today! It's a word that He wants you to hear today. It is a word that He gave to me and now I want to give you to you. It's about anchor points of strength for an unstable time.

Have you ever faced a violent storm? Like a tornado or what about a hurricane? Anyone here ever lived through a hurricane at close range? I recently read a report about a group of men who faced a hurricane while out at sea. It was the real thing and not just a Hollywood creation. According to the report, the only way to ride out a hurricane in a boat is to anchor deep! You place four anchors in four different locations. You leave the rope slack and pray for the best. Anchoring deep is the only way to ride out a storm. So the question is: **How can I find the stability of God in my very unstable world?** Are there any anchor points? Many of you in this room have been caught in a storm. The weather is brewing and the water is rising and you can see the trees beginning to bend. And so the question is a valid one and needs to be answered: How can I find the stability of God for my life?

Well, I have an answer for you today. It comes from the throne of grace, and it is found in the 51st chapter of Isaiah. It is found amidst the words of the prophet to a people who were facing their own unstable times. Having been devastated as a nation, they were hauled off into captivity by a conquering nation. The Israelite people were imprisoned, and feeling hopeless. Their world had shattered, and their future looked empty. They were facing an unstable time, but God, through his prophet Isaiah gave them some anchor points. Let's read **Isaiah 51:1-8...Prayer**

As I read this passage I am convinced that there are a couple anchor points that I want to give you this morning in hopes that God will give you an anchor for whatever instability you face.

1) The first anchor point for an unstable time is this: look **back** to God's **provision**.

In this passage Isaiah tells us that we have to first look to the ROCK! It says, *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many. The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.”* (Isa 51:1-3) Look to the Rock! The rock of Abraham from which you were hewn or as another translation states it, dug. Abraham was their consummate example of faith from their history. So God says through the prophet, look back and realize that Abraham was just like you:

- He struggled with his faith at times.
- He didn't know what to do, he had to just uproot and start walking because the Lord has said so.
- He had no kids, and no prospects.
- Life was more than just a little unstable for him.

However, God gave him a promise. God promised him a child, and God kept that promise! So, the people to whom Isaiah wrote could ground their future in the promise that God gave to Abraham. Now, here is the point; it's a principle I want you to catch: **Focusing on the past can stabilize you in the face of an uncertain future!** Remember the way God has fulfilled his promises for you in the past, and it will stabilize you with what you are facing. *I remember a man I counseled with once. He was facing some storms in his life. He had lost his job. He had no way to support his wife and 3 children. Things were a little shaky in the marriage.*

And so, we talked. We talked about his faith as much as anything. And he made the hard decisions and he committed his life to God, right there in my office. He put his trust and faith in God for his future.

Well, a day or so later, I got a call from this man. He said, “You are not going to believe what happened.” Before that man could even get home, God was fulfilling his promise to provide for those who obey him.

At the gas station, someone offered a job and the critically needed resources. He said to me on the phone, “I just couldn't believe all that God was doing for me – and so quickly!”

I want you to know something: That event in his life stabilized him when times got turbulent in the future. And trust me, I walked with that man through some very turbulent times. But we could always point back to that experience and it gave tremendous hope and confidence. When faced with unstable times, look back and remember God's provision. When times get tough for me, and I wonder where is God in all this mess: God makes sure that my children come bouncing along into my life. I will never be able to look into the eyes of my children without knowing that God worked a miracle in my life. God worked a miracle – actually God worked three miracles and gave me Ally, Sarah, and Emily. Look back and see the provision of God in your life. It will stabilize you when you are facing turbulent times.

Has God ever worked in your life? I want you to make a note in the margin of your outline there. Make a note of a time when God worked in your life. Just a word or two to remind you:

- Maybe it was a time He provided for you.
- Maybe it was a time he protected you.
- Maybe it was the blessings of a spouse or a child or a church.
- Maybe it was the time God forgave you and took away the guilt.

But just make a note. And then, when you get a chance, make an entire list of those things and keep it in your bible so that when times get tough and you begin to struggle against the instabilities of life, then you can pull out that list and look at it. **Focusing on the past can stabilize you in the face of an uncertain future.**

2) Isaiah said; when you are facing an unstable future, look back to God's provision. But then he said, look up to god's **presence!**

That's what Isaiah was pointing at in vv. 4-6, *"Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail."* (Isa 51:4-6) He says, "Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation." God is telling them to give Him their attention. He is telling them to look up to Him. In the midst of all of their instability, in the face of all their battles and burdens; Isaiah told them to look up and realize the presence of God. Look up and focus again on who God is and what he is doing. Specifically, Isaiah told them to focus on three things:

a) He told them to Focus on God's **purpose**. Isaiah said, *"Focus on God's purpose which will be fulfilled regardless of the efforts of the enemy."* Then listen again to vs. 5: *"My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm."* (Isa 51:5) God's plan of salvation will be fulfilled regardless of anything this world throws at you. The struggles you face, the burdens you carry, the problems you deal with cannot thwart God's purpose for your life. And that purpose is to save your soul and redeem your life. So, look up and focus on God's purpose which will be fulfilled regardless of the efforts of the enemy.

b) And then look up and focus on God's **program** that is on target even when we can't see it. Isaiah says vs. 4: *"Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations."* (Isa 51:4) God's plan for your life is on schedule, folks. Even in an unstable world. God knows what he is doing, even when you can't see it. *I heard recently about a wealthy Texan who was in the habit of giving his dad unique gifts on Father's Day. One year it was lessons on hang-gliding. The year before that it was the entire record collection of Slim Whitman's hits.*

But this past year he felt he had outdone himself. He purchased a rare kind of talking bird that could speak five languages and sing "The Yellow Rose of Texas" while standing on one foot. The talented bird cost ten thousand dollars, but he felt it was worth every penny. This would be a Father's Day gift his dad would never forget.

A week after Father's Day he called his father. "Dad, how did you like the bird?"

His father responded, "It was delicious!"

Sometimes, our best plans fall apart, but God's plans always come through. And that includes his plan for your life. So, look up today and focus on God's program which is on target even when you can't see it.

c) And then look up and focus on God's **power** that can move heaven and earth and even your circumstances. Look at vs. 6 again: *"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail."* (Isa 51:6) God's power can move heaven and earth and even your circumstances. So look up today. Look up and remember that God will not only help you hang on, but he will also bring you through victoriously. The song "Turn your eyes upon Jesus" is a very good illustration of exactly that. *Oh soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There's light for a look at at the Savior, and life more than abundant and free.*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

His word shall not fail you, he promised; believe him and all will be well. Then go to a world that is dying, his perfect salvation to tell.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

I do not deserve for God to do such miraculous things in my life, but He did them. Whenever I face struggles and difficulties now, all I have to do is look back and remember what God has done for me, and then look up in confidence that God's power is still more than able to move heaven and earth on our behalf. God can solve all of your problems, too. And here is the point: **Stop focusing on your problems, and start focusing on the problem solver!** Remember that God can and will be victorious!

3) When faced with an unstable time, look back to God's provision, look up to God's presence, and then look around to God's **people**.

Listen to vs. 3 again, *"The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing."* (Isa 51:3) Zion was a term used in the OT to refer to God's people and the land of Israel. And the Lord was saying through the prophet, "Look around at God's people." Notice there is comfort in the face of hardship. Notice that there is compassion in the face of heartache. Notice there is confidence in the face of instability. Look around to God's people. And not only will you find evidence of my sustaining grace. You will also find the hands and the hearts that I will use to sustain you with my grace. **When faced with an unstable time, one of the most important things you can do is to look around to God's people.**

Get connected to God's people. Get into a relationship with other believers and you are going to find that God will use those people to strengthen you and encourage you and see you through. Now, I am going to take a chance right here in order to prove that to you. I'm going to take a survey.

- How many of you at some time in your life when you facing a hard time;
- How many of you would raise up your hands to say that during that difficult time God used somebody else around you to encourage you and to see you through that time?
- How many of you have experienced God's touch through one of God's people during a difficult time in your life?

Let me see your hands. Can you see it? When faced with a destabilizing future, always look around to God's people. Your tendency will be to withdraw from the church and from people, but that is just a tactic the devil uses to isolate you and destroy you. Your need is to look around to God's people and stay connected; because God is going to use those people to see you through.

4) We need to look back to God's provision; look up to God's presence, look around to God's people, and then look ahead to God's **promise**.

You can look ahead without fear! It says right here, *"Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations."* (Isa 51:7-8) Can you see it yet? When you have looked back and recalled how God has stabilized you in the past, and you have looked up and remembered what God can do through his God's presence even in your storm; and you have looked around and recognized God's people who are put there to see you through; then you will be able to look ahead and realize just what God can do in your future. You will be able to look ahead without fear, confident that God will keep his promises, because here is the point. **Your problems are always temporary, but God's answers are always eternal!** Whatever you are facing, it is only temporary. It will pass. But God's answers are always eternal. God has promised: "I will leave never you nor forsake you" and you can take that one to the bank!

- He has promised, "I will provide for you"
- He has promised, "I will protect you."
- He has promised, "I will love you with an undying love."

And those promises are eternal. Your problems are always temporary, but God's answers are always eternal.

A man who lived in Chicago worked as a carpenter. On one particular day, he was building some crates for the clothes his church was sending to some orphanage in China. On his way home, he reached into his shirt pocket to find his glasses, but they were gone. When he mentally replayed his earlier actions, he realized what happened; the glasses had slipped out of his pocket unnoticed and fallen into one of the crates, which he had nailed shut. His brand new glasses were heading for China!

The Great Depression was at its height and the man had six children. He had spent \$20 for those glasses that very morning. He was upset by the thought of having to buy another pair. "It's not fair," he told God as he drove home in frustration. "I've been very faithful in giving of my time and money to your work, and now this."

Several months later, the director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that supported him in China, so he came to speak one Sunday at the small church in Chicago. The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage.

"But most of all," he said, "I must thank you for the glasses you sent last year. You see, the Communists had just swept through the orphanage, destroying everything, including my glasses. I was desperate. Even if I had the money, there was simply no way of replacing those glasses. Along with not being able to see well, I experienced headaches every day, so my coworkers and I were much in prayer about this. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses lying on top."

The missionary paused long enough to let his words sink in. Then, still gripped with the wonder of it all, he continued: "Folks, when I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom-made just for me! I want to thank you for being a part of that."

The people listened, happy for the miraculous glasses. But the missionary surely must have confused their church with another, they thought. There were no glasses on their list of items to be sent overseas. But sitting quietly in the back, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized the Master Carpenter had used him in an extraordinary way.

You may be facing a real unstable time right now. But you don't have to worry about tomorrow! Because God has already set the answer in motion, because with God your problems are always temporary, as where God's answers are always eternal.

How Can I Discover The Stability of God for My Life?
Isaiah 51:1-8

Looking for stability in an unstable world! How can I discover the stability of God for my life?

4 Anchor points in an unstable world:

1) Look back to God's provision.

"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many. The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing." (Isa 51:1-3)

Focusing on the past can stabilize you in the face of an uncertain future!

2) Look Up To God's Presence.

"Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail." (Isa 51:4-6)

Three realities on which to focus:

a) Focus on God's purpose.

"My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm." (Isa 51:5)

b) Focus on God's program.

"Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. (Isa 51:4)

c) Focus on God's power.

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail." (Isa 51:6)

3) Look around to God's people.

The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing." (Isa 51:3)

4) Look ahead to God's promise.

"Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations." (Isa 51:7-8)

Your problems are always temporary, but God's answers are always eternal!

Anchor Deep In God Today!