

Isaiah's Message to America

My Life Verse

Do you know what a "life verse" is? A life verse is a verse or passage of Scripture that has become so significant to you that your life is literally wrapped around it. It impacts every dimension of your being. It molds you. It has made you what you are and continues to shape you into what you shall yet become.

Isaiah 40:8 is my life verse.

TEXT: **Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

INTRODUCTION: Although I have often made reference to how God made this my life verse, I do not believe I have ever told the full story to you on a Sunday morning, and maybe not even the full story on Sunday night. The reason I have not is because I really am loathe for a worship service or even a sermon to be about me. And I hope and pray that my sharing of this part of my life this morning will not do that, will not focus any attention on me. But as God concentrated my study this week, not merely on this verse of Scripture but the message of the chapter in which it is encased, I felt the compelling of the Holy Spirit to share what God did in my life.

And to be frank, there is nothing self exalting about this story. In fact, it is a story of my failure and of my sin, but it is also a story of God's rescue and His exceedingly marvelous grace.

Isa. 40:8 has not always been my life verse of course. I wasn't born with it tattooed on my chest, although if I were going to wear tattoos, Isa. 40:8 would go on one arm and Acts 1:8 would go on the other!

But I was raised to trust in Christ and to believe the Bible. I was saved when I was 8 years old, and even through high school I just never considered that any part of the Bible might not be true. Yes, I knew there were lots of people who did not believe the Bible was true, but I thought they were all atheists or agnostics. The thought that people who claimed to be followers of Christ would then also claim that parts of the Bible were erroneous just never entered my mind.

At the beginning of my senior year in high school, God called me to preach. I had already made application to several Ivy League schools, and my only question about the direction of my life was whether I was going to do pre-law or pre-engineering. I even had a sweet, beautiful new girlfriend named Karen who also loved the Lord. So, when God called me to preach, I very suddenly had to change my college plans. I withdrew my applications to prestigious schools on the east coast and sent an application to our state Baptist university, because that was just where preacher boys were supposed to go. In retrospect, I should have prayed a lot more about it, but at the time it seemed the automatic thing to do if I was going to be obedient to God's call to preach.

So, I went to college as a young preacher boy, trying to prepare to teach and preach the Word of God, and it was there that I received my first exposure to liberalism, sad to say, from the Baptists.

Liberals do not believe the Bible is historically or literally true. They believe that only the spiritual message of the Bible is true. Therefore, a liberal might conclude from Gen. 6 to 9 that a worldwide flood never occurred, but they believe that it is true that God judges sin. They may not believe in the virgin birth, but they would say that in some way Jesus should be called the Son of God.

It did not take me very long to learn that the Baptist college I had gone to train to be a preacher was filled with liberals, professors and students. Now let me be clear. Not everyone was a liberal in either faculty or student body. But it became apparent to me very quickly that the seemingly smartest students and professors were proponents of liberalism. The chairman of the Department of Religion openly said in the classroom that angels were not real. He explained that they were added to the Bible by editors as a result of Persian influence during the captivity.

The very idea that professors would do this causes my blood to boil today. That men and women would draw their salaries from God fearing, Bible believing people in the pews of our churches and then turn around and teach the students entrusted to their care that the Bible is full of myths, legends, and mistakes is so repulsive to me that it makes me want to do what the whale did with Jonah. But it was not repulsive to me then. It seemed sophisticated. It seemed scholarly. And in my pride, I became willingly deceived.

I quickly joined their crowd. I began to doubt the veracity of many passages of Scripture, especially those that mentioned miracles. I abandoned my belief in a seven day creation, Noah's ark, or that the Red Sea opened before Moses and Israel. It was a sad predicament. I was called to preach the Word of God, but I had to be selective about what I preached, because I did not believe it all. I continued in this deplorable condition for seven years, though all of college and half of seminary.

When I arrived at seminary to begin work on a Master of Divinity degree, I was very comfortable with the liberal professors I met there. Again, not all were liberal, but many were. The head of the Department of New Testament said the shedding of Jesus' blood was not necessary. It would have been the same if He had been hung. He explained that salvation came not because He shed His blood or even died in our place but that His death was an example to us of giving our lives in service to others. Other men and women in the classroom who were preparing for lives in ministry or in missions sat with mouths agape and minds confused because they had not all come from liberal undergraduate schools as I had. For me, it was just another layer of clothing that insulated me from the warm Presence of the Spirit of God. My academic pride, my self sufficiency, my confidence in human intellect, especially my own, left me with a hot mind but a very cold heart.

But God in His grace was not content to leave me there. Through a challenge issued by a teen, I began to study the issue of origins, weighing the evidence for evolution against the evidence for a direct, miraculous creation. Having a math degree and science background, I was equipped to consider the arguments and evidence of each. I studied harder than I ever had before, in college or in seminary. I reread the evolutionist textbooks I had studied in college and bought some more. I did not even know that creationist books existed. But God in His mercy had me stumble upon one which led me to others, and I read them as well.

Although I began my study as a convictional evolutionist, I ended it as a creationist. The evidence from geology, paleontology, biology, cosmology, thermodynamics, and probability was overwhelming. I became convinced, by the evidence, that Genesis 1 and 2 were absolutely true.

Once I was convinced that Genesis was true, it did not take me long to figure out that the whole Bible had to be true.

My life verse became Isa. 40:8 The grass withers, and the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Now, I've told you why Isa. 40:8 is my life verse. Let me use what little time I have left telling you about the rest of Isa. chapter 40. You see, the rest of the chapter explains the answer to the question: **Why will the Word of God stand forever?**

I. BECAUSE GOD ALONE KNOWS EVERYTHING.

Isaiah 40:12–14

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,

Measured heaven with a span

And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?

Weighed the mountains in scales

And the hills in a balance?

¹³ Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,

Or as His counselor has taught Him?

¹⁴ With whom did He take counsel, and *who* instructed Him,

And taught Him in the path of justice?

Who taught Him knowledge,

And showed Him the way of understanding?

We humans think we are so smart. We read the first question: **Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand?**

The U.S. Geological Survey says, “I got that one!” On a web page updated on Friday, they offer this calculation:

Water source	Water volume, in cubic miles	Percent of total water
Oceans, Seas, & Bays	321,000,000	96.54
Ice caps, Glaciers, & Permanent Snow	5,773,000	1.74
Groundwater	5,614,000	1.69
Fresh	2,526,000	0.76
Saline	3,088,000	0.93
Soil Moisture	3,959	0.001
Ground Ice & Permafrost	71,970	0.022
Lakes	42,320	0.013
Fresh	21,830	0.007
Saline	20,490	0.006
Atmosphere	3,095	0.001
Swamp Water	2,752	0.0008
Rivers	509	0.0002
Biological Water	269	0.0001

But they missed the news broken by other scientists just this Thursday (March 13, 2014). Here is the press release:

Scientists believe a massive quantity of water is located beneath the surface of the Earth exists due to the discovery of a diamond in a Brazilian waterbed. The tiny, tattered diamond discovered among a bed of gravel along a shallow riverbed provided evidence to the confirmation of a “wet zone” located deep with the Earth that could hold more water than all of the oceans on the surface combined.

Woops, our measure of the quantity of the water on the earth just doubled overnight.

God alone knows!

Why will the Word of God stand forever?

II. BECAUSE GOD ALONE HAS ALL POWER.

Isaiah 40:21-23, 26

²¹ Have you not known?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²² *It is He* who sits above the circle of the earth,

And its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers,

Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these *things*,
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of *His* power;
Not one is missing.

III. BECAUSE GOD ALONE IS THE SOURCE OF EVERYTHING WE NEED.

Isaiah 40:28–31

²⁸ Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
²⁹ He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
³¹ But those who wait on 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.

A. We do not have within ourselves all we need.

Isaiah 40:6–7

⁶ ... “All flesh *is* grass,

And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,

Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;

Surely the people *are* grass.

We are like the grass that withers and dies. Even our loveliness, or better, our strength, fades like a flower in the winter.

B. Other people cannot offer what we need.

Isaiah 40:15–17

¹⁵ Behold, the nations *are* as a drop in a bucket,

And are counted as the small dust on the scales;

Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.

¹⁶ And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn,

Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.

¹⁷ All nations before Him *are* as nothing,

And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

This does not mean that the nations or the people are of no importance to God but that they have nothing to offer that we need.

C. Only God can offer what we need.

Isaiah 40:11

He will feed His flock like a shepherd;

He will gather the lambs with His arm,

And carry *them* in His bosom,

And gently lead those who are with young.

D. And God has given us His Word to tell us about it.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

CONCLUSION: I invite you to make this your life verse.