

Grumpy Old Men?

- Film! (1993)
 - Walter Matthau & Jack Lemmon
- Neighbours - bickered - rivals - grumpy - but Hollywood made it all OK in the end!
 - *the fabric of their relationship was built on complaint!*

Cause for Complaint

- Maybe we sometimes feel we have cause for complaint.
 - life isn't being good to us....
 - family relationships aren't what we'd like them to be....
 - our health is playing up....
 - we are unable to do the things we want to do, for whatever reason....
 - work isn't good; maybe we don't have any...
 - maybe we feel something of that in our church situation - numbers, challenges, relationships?
- Sometimes life can just seem a wearisome business.
- God's people Israel felt a bit like that.
 - I sketched in the context this morning - God's people are in exile
- (Some at least) feel as if God has deserted them
 - so they were complaining!
 - "Why doesn't God help us?", they were asking
- They'd taken their eyes off him, and started to look at themselves and their own problems;
 - and so they'd lost their sense of perspective

What Does God Say?

- God's reply to their complaint comes in the verses we read.
 - these verses come in the context of a chapter where God has a plan and a purpose to send a Messiah - see vs.3-4 re John Baptist; God's comfort is that he is at work...
 - *but there is a dissonance between what God is promising and what the people are feeling!*
- Pick out **three** parts to God's reply:

First - look at God

- *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? 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."* (28)
 - **everlasting**; (will outlast problem!)
 - **creator**; (made all resources of earth)
 - **un-tiring**; (no problem too big!)
 - **complete understanding** (understands whole problem)
- **He is big enough to sort out any problem, deal with any situation!**
 - implicitly, put your feelings in the context of who God is!
- *Apply that to your situation...*

Second - look at his help

- *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.* (29)
- God gives help exactly as required:
 - strength to the weary;
 - power to the weak.
- Not just for physical living - though that isn't excluded either!
- Also for the emotional and mental strength we need to cope with pain and difficult situations:

- the patience to wait for things to heal slowly;
- the forbearance when health is not going to improve;
- the grace to bring love and healing into difficult relationships;
- the comfort we need in times of grief.

Notice that God gives what help folk NEED, as opposed to DESIRE?

- he could, I suppose, have taken away the problem that they were working at, the thing that was making them weary...
- but he didn't; he gave them strength in their situation!
- In the kinds of problems we face, do we ask God to take the issue away, or give us strength to come through it?
 - not just a resignation to our fate; God sometimes does radically change things; but most often he brings us through difficulties that we might grow in faith and trust.
- *Apply that to your situation...*

Wings Like Eagles

- *Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; (31) 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. (30)*
- Through Isaiah God then uses a couple of illustrations to try and help his people understand what he means!
- First, in v.30, the negative example of youth - those who typically trust in themselves!
 - ever tried to tell a teenager that they are wrong, that they'll understand when they are older?!
 - but that personal strength fails, its not enough to sustain a whole life!
- Where then is the strength for the weary, the power for the weak?
 - from hoping in the Lord
 - from leaning on him, not ourselves
- And what is the result of this entrustment?
 - the example God uses to illustrate his help is by comparing God's strength given to a eagle soaring on its great wings!
- Effortlessly above trouble; strong & free from fear!
 - but held there by invisible forces!
 - actually a great deal of effort is used by the eagle to entrust itself to the winds; it isn't just hanging there doing nothing;
 - when we lived in a tenement in Edinburgh, we'd often see gulls outside our back window - making constant adjustments to their wings to hover in windy weather...
- If that's a bit fanciful, a bit too good to be true, then how about run and not grow weary, walk and not faint:
 - in the drudgery of life, too, God sustains those who place their trust in him
- That is how God desires us to be:
 - fully entrusting ourselves to him;
 - finding sustaining in him;
 - actively leaning on him when things are hard, rather than complaining that God isn't around!
- Pick out something - maybe a personal thing, maybe a congregational thing - and over the coming week pray:
 - "Lord, I place my trust in you for the future; give me your strength to fly, to run, to walk.
- **See if God does not prove faithful!**