

Text: Isaiah 41:1-13

Theme: Antidote to fear and Anxiety

Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Evening Worship Service on 06/09/2015 at 5.00pm

Let's look at the verse, **Isaiah 41:10** first, which is our main focus and afterwards see how the preceding verses amplify the meaning of the verse.

There are two commands in the verse not to fear and these are anchored on five great promises: "Do not fear" is the first command at the beginning of the verse. And then the second is "do not be dismayed" that is do not anxiously look about you". As always in the Bible, there are reasons for the commands. Commands don't hang in the air with no basis in reality. If God commands us to do something, there are good reasons to do it. And power comes from understanding and believing those reasons.

Here, there are the five reasons.

1. **"For I am with you" - "Do not fear, for I am with you."**
2. **"I am your God" - "Do not look anxiously about you, for I am your God."**
3. **"I will strengthen you."**
4. **"Surely I will help you."**
5. **"Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."**

The key to overcoming fear is resting on the promises of God.

We will come back to these promises in a moment. Look with me for a minute at the verses leading up to verse 10 to see how they intensify these promises.

In Isaiah 41:1 God says, "Coastlands, listen to Me in silence, and let the peoples gain new strength; let them come forward, then let them speak; let us come together for judgment."

Here is a picture of God calling all the coastlands and all the peoples to gird up their strength and come before him for judgment. The God of Isaiah 41:10 is the judge of all the earth. He calls all nations to give an account of their lives and their religions and their thoughts. He is not called to account. He is not on trial. They are. They come into his courtroom. He is the judge of all and will pass sentence on every person. That is the God who is with you to strengthen and help.

In Isaiah 41:2-3 Isaiah asks, "Who has aroused one from the east [probably Cyrus the Persian king that God stirred up to come against Babylon] whom He [God] calls in righteousness to His feet? It is God. He delivers up nations before him, and subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, as the wind-driven chaff with his bow."

Here is a picture of God rousing a king and leading him in conquest and delivering up nations before him. The God of Isaiah 41:10 is Ruler of the rulers of history. He controls the affairs of men and nations for his purposes. That's who gives the reasons for fearlessness in Isaiah 41:10.

In Isaiah 41:4 Isaiah asks again, "Who has performed and accomplished it, calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.'"

Here is a picture of God not only judging the nations and ruling the rulers of the earth but calling all the nations of the earth into being - "calling forth the generations from the beginning." God is the first - he is the absolute reality before all other reality and on which all other reality depends. He is the uncreated first. And he will be there with the last when all is accomplished according to his eternal purpose.

When God answers, "I, the Lord, am the first..." the word "Lord" is "Jehovah" or Yahweh. Franz Delitzsch comments on this verse: "It is the full meaning of the name Jehovah which is unfolded here; for God is called Jehovah as the absolute I, the absolutely free Being, pervading all history, and yet above all history..." (cited in E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3, p 76). That's the God of Isaiah 41:10 who strengthens and helps and upholds.

In verses 5–7 Isaiah shows us the desperate attempts of the nations to persuade themselves that they and their gods are strong. Verse 5: they are afraid and they come together. Verse 6: they try to encourage each other not to be afraid, and say, "Be strong!" Verse 7: the idol makers who smooth the metal with the goldsmiths and carpenters and others build and fasten the idols so they can be supported try to encourage each other and say, "It is good." In other words, a picture of the unrepentant nations is painted as they desperately try to convince themselves that their self-wrought gods, made with soldering and nails, are really adequate for their needs.

Over against this desperation of self-reliance and idolatry God says to his people in verses 8–9, "But you [are] Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham my friend, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts, and said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.'"

The God who judges the nations, and rules the rulers of the nations, and calls the nations into being, has chosen his people for himself, calling them from their hopeless distance from him, and taking them to be his servant. It would be easy for those who read this message at the time of Isaiah to look at the devastation of their cities and temples to find this statement baffling. Their captivity is meant for their good. It is on record that when the Israelites returned from captivity, it was no longer business as usual but a returning to the God of their fathers. If there was anything they deserved as a result of their apostasy and idolatry, it is total annihilation. And here, God is saying You are my servant. I have chosen you. You have not chosen me. I am the One who sought after you.

That is what God has done for us in Christ. God left His throne and became a baby to die for us on the cross. He chose us before the foundation of the world. He called us out of darkness and death. And he took us for himself to be his. To make himself our God.

Therefore, do not fear.

- **I am your God—over you.**
- **I am with you—by your side.**
- **I will strengthen you—from inside of you.**
- **I will help you—all around you from wherever the enemy comes.**
- **I will uphold you—from underneath you.**

Over you, by you, inside you, around you, underneath you. I call you this evening to stop defining and limiting your future in terms of your past and start defining it in terms of your God. I call you to recognize that God is greater than your personality. God is greater than your past experiences of timidity. God is greater than your "family of origin." And God calls you to joyful fearlessness. The crucial factor in your fearless living is not your family but your God. "Let not your hearts be troubled, BELIEVE IN GOD." Believe in God! Trust God! Let God be your God! Your help. Your strength. He will uphold you with his righteous right hand. Fear is not from God. II Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

The majority of our fears are made up in our own minds. Are you backing down more than standing up? See how Jesus helped his timid disciples. Before they became the Stained-glassed saints in the windows of cathedrals, they were somebody's next door neighbours

trying to make a living. When we are able to answer the big questions of eternity, the little questions of life fall into Perspective.

(Verses 10-13) “So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”.

When God calls you to be free from fear as you do evangelism, as you take a test, as you face an interview, as you take a stand against an unjust business practice, as you confront someone with sin in their life, when you leave a secure position and take a risk in a new venture, when you face an operation or a treatment, when you lose a spouse or a friend—when God calls you to be free from fear (to overcome this natural emotion and have peace), he does not leave the command hanging in the air.

He puts pillars under it. Five of them. That's the nature of all biblical commands. They come with divine support:

1. **Fear not . . . God is with you;**
2. **Fear not . . . God is your God;**
3. **Fear not . . . God will strengthen you;**
4. **Fear not . . . God will help you;**
5. **Fear not . . . God will uphold you.**

If He cares when a sparrow falls, He cares about you. If He knows how many hairs are on your head, He cares for you. Every aspect of your life is under the care of God. God cares about your situations at work and about your broken family. He cares about your situations. You can't name one thing that God doesn't care about in your life. He cares.

I find in my experience as a Christian, counsellor and pastor that people lack strength and courage in Christ because they really don't believe that God cares. There is no other way of tapping into God's resources beside reading his holy word and believing whatever God says about himself and about you.

God says to us who believe, I am your God. I am with you. I will strength you. I will help you. I will uphold you. Jesus tells us that He will never leave us or forsake us. That He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the one who is and was and always will be, and no matter what happens to you this week, next week, next month, next year He is there. So, your promise about courage is this, be of good courage, stand up tall, because the Lord your God is your protector, and your shield and your very great reward.

Knowing God's promise and assurances given to us, do we see *the terrible nature of our fear and unbelief?* To say to God, You are not with me. You are not the God of glory and might. You do not really love me. That is an insult to God's integrity.

“Every truthful man feels that he has a right to be believed. He speaks upon the honour of an honest man, and if you say, I cannot believe you, and even begin to lament that you have no faith in him, the reflection is not upon yourself, but on the person whom you cannot believe. And shall it ever come to this that Gods own children shall say that they cannot believe their God? Oh, sin of sins! It takes away the very Godhead from God, for if God be not true, he is not a God; and if he be not fit to be believed, neither is he fit to be adored, for a God whom you cannot trust you cannot worship. (Spurgeon)

You haven't got five choices, you don't have ten. When you find yourself in trouble, you have to make one of two choices. Those are your choices. How many times have you turned to the world? Probably a lot of times and it has not helped you. But how many times have you said I will turn to my Heavenly Father? And then he has come along side and carried you through. We all know what I am talking about. Many times we find ourselves in fearful situations and

instead of turning to God you try to work it out yourself. That is turning to the world. The bible says this, if you draw near unto me I will draw near unto you.