

The 'Fear Not's' of Isaiah

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's presence, love, and protection to overcome fear and find peace.

Scripture: Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 43:1

Topics: "Trusting God's Promises", "Overcoming Fear"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the recurring theme of 'fear not' in Isaiah, highlighting God's promises of presence, strength, and protection for His people. He explains that God reassures us through His companionship, love, and the assurance of His help, urging believers to trust in His faithfulness despite life's challenges. Simpson elaborates on the significance of God's redemptive love and the spiritual blessings that come from trusting Him, encouraging the congregation to overcome fear with faith. He concludes by reminding us that fear is often rooted in unbelief and that perfect love casts out fear, urging believers to live in confidence of God's promises.

Transcript

This little message "fear not" is almost one of the keynotes of Isaiah. The chord of his later messages was struck in the opening of the fortieth chapter by the words, "Comfort, comfort My people," and in keeping with this message He again and again reassures His troubled people in these words of comfort and encouragement, "Fear not."

We find the phrase in five passages and repeated several times in some of them.

I. Isaiah 41: 10-14. "Fear not; for I am with you, be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.

"Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish.

"You shall seek them and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought.

"For I the Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you."

"Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

Three times the words "fear not" are repeated in this passage and five reasons are given why we should not fear.

1. The first is God's presence with us: "Fear not for I am with you." His companionship under all circumstances and in all places guarantees our safety and may well charm away our fears.

2. God's relation to us as our God: "Be not dismayed, for I am your God." He gives Himself to us. He gives us the right to use Him against every possible need in His infinite resources. What need we fear with such a God?

3. The strength He promises to give us. "I will strengthen you." That is actual imparted strength to us. This comes in connection with the reassurance, "Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you feeble men of Israel." It stands over against their unworthiness and weakness. Jacob was indeed a worm and Israel was weak, but God says, "I will strengthen you."

4. His promise of help. "Yes, I will help you." Not only does He give us actual strength but He adds His strength to us. This is very much more.

5. His upholding. "Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." This is more than strength, more than help. It is God undertaking the entire responsibility of our case. Our strength will fail; even His help will be insufficient for when God only helps us and we stand in front responsible for the conflict, we shall not be sufficient. But there comes a time when we completely fail and fall into His almighty hand and then He takes us up bodily and carries us altogether and it is no longer a man doing his best and God helping him, but God all in all and the man letting Him be all.

In this paragraph there is a beautiful reassurance: "I will hold your right hand, saying to you," or more literally, "I will keep saying to you." It is not enough for Him to say it once. We need to hear it over and over again and He never tires saying it to His troubled children until He has cheered away all our fears and sorrows.

II. Isaiah 43: 1-7. "But now this says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

"For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.

"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you and people for your life.

"Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even everyone that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him."

Here is a new group of fear nots and new reasons for our confidence.

1. "I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine." The fact that He has purchased us with the precious blood of Christ should be enough to guarantee every other blessing we need. "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things." After Calvary, anything. Then He says, "You are Mine." We are His property and He will take care of His property. It is His interest even more than ours to guard and bless us.

2. He promises to go with us through the waters and the fires. It is in the dark hour that we know His consolations. That hour will surely come and come often; but it will give us cause to say, "You have known my soul in adversities." Indeed, we are often most truly happy in such trying hours, for God's consolation more than outweighs the pressure of our troubles.

3. God's love to us and sacrifices for us. "Since you were precious in My eyes, you have been honorable and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you and people for your life." There is something inexpressibly tender about these words. God loves us with a jealous love that puts everything aside that would hurt us or hinder us. There is a suggestion here of the infinite pains and trouble that He has had with us, and after all this, He is not likely to fail us. Therefore we should not fear, for nothing can work against His will.

4. He promises spiritual fruit. Whatever our troubles may be, it is an infinite comfort if they are overruled for His glory and the good of men. He tells us here that He will bring our seed to the north and south and east and west and that the fruit of our life shall not be permitted to fail. The seed we sow may seem to perish, but we shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us!

III. Isaiah 44: 1-5. "Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: This says the Lord that made you and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant: and you, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

"One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Here He comforts His troubled children by the promise of a great spiritual blessing and a widespread and lasting revival. He will pour out His Spirit upon the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. He will revive His languishing cause and make the drooping plants of grace to spring up like grass and like willows by the water courses. He will send the comforting power of His grace so that here and there one shall say, "I am the Lord's" and another shall confess His name and unite himself with his people, and the third shall rise to high blessing and enter into deeper covenant with God and call himself by the higher name of Israel.

The Holy Spirit is the best antidote to our fears and when He comes all the interests of His good cause are safe and all fears are turned to rejoicing and thanksgiving.

IV. Isaiah 51: 12, 13. "I, even I, am He that comforts you: who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forget the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and have feared continually every

day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?"

This passage shows us the sin of fear. It is an act of unbelief. It leads us to forget the Lord, our Maker. It comes from not remembering His power and faithfulness. All our depressions and discouragements are direct reflections upon Him who has always loved and cared for us. We are also reminded in this passage of the folly of our fears. "Who are you that you shall be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass and has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, and where is the fury of the oppressor?" How very empty are all our anxious cares. How many things we allow to worry us that really never come to pass. How sad and needless the waste of life through such foolish frets and fears.

V. Isaiah 54: 4-17.

Four great reasons are given in this splendid passage why God's trusting children should not fear.

1. His tender personal relation to them. "Your Maker is your Husband: the Lord of hosts is His name, the God of the whole earth shall He be called." This figure of the marriage relation was familiar in all ancient religions, but it was polluted by the grossest abuses. God purifies it and lifts it up to the highest spiritual meaning. There is no suggestion of physical coarseness. It is merely the love of the husband to the wife and the love of the bride that are expressed in the divine marriage. But there is such a love, intense, tender and peculiar which God recognizes in His more intimate relations to His consecrated people and that fellowship and that love guarantee all possible blessings and safeguards. The husband cherishes his wife even at the cost of his own life and the love of a true wife is stronger than death. How infinitely condescending it is on the part of God to stoop to such a fellowship with mortal and sinful beings and with such a love how little cause have we to fear.

2. His covenant and oath. "I have sworn," He says, "that I will not be wroth with you nor rebuke you." There is a reference here to the covenant made with Noah of which the rainbow was the symbol and the seal, and God tells us with equal certainty that He has sworn to His eternal love to Israel. But these great promises are not exclusively the property of Israel any more than the epistles to the Ephesians and Galatians belong exclusively to those churches. God spoke through His ancient people to every heart in every language, that can still appropriate His promises, and this is true for you and me if we will claim it and live up to it. Many Christians are constantly under the law and they look to God as though they ever expected a frown and a blow. Rather, we should live in such perfect love that we could not even imagine His failing or forgetting us. There are some human friendships that have never had a cloud upon them. It is very beautiful to have a love that never was shaken. This is the love that God wants us to have to Him. There is a suggestion here of a time when there was a cloud. "In a little wrath I hid My face from you; for a small moment have I forsaken you." But this is all over now since Christ has died for us and God is ever striving by His great love to make us forget that there ever was such a thing as sin between His heart and ours. Beloved, have we been wholly delivered from the law and are we living in His perfect love that casts out fear?

3. He promises us His protecting care. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." There shall be enemies. There shall be temptations and trials, but God will protect us, preserve and vindicate us and we need fear no foe if we are trusting in Him. "Who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?"

4. Finally He promises us His own righteousness. He does not vindicate us and protect us because we are worthy. Let us not flatter ourselves with any self-righteousness. "Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." This is the mystery of His love; that He treats us as if we were faultless although we are full of blame. He accepts us in Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, clothes us with His imputed righteousness and treats us and loves us as if we were as perfect and faultless as He. What need we fear with such a defense? "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

Such are some of the "fear nots" of Isaiah. Let us add one or two concluding considerations to save us from our fears.

1. It will help us to remember that the devil's fears are always falsehoods. If fear comes from Satan, then we may invariably conclude that there is nothing to fear, because his suggestions are always lies, and if lies, they cannot harm.

2. Fear is dangerous. It turns into fact the things we fear. It creates the evil just as faith creates the good. "I feared a fear and it came upon me," is the solemn warning of Job. Let us therefore be afraid of our fears lest they should become our worst foes.

3. The remedy for fear is faith and love. "What time I am afraid I will trust in You." "Perfect love casts out fear." "Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we also in this world."

Beloved, let us no longer dishonor Him by our doubts and fears but trust Him and honor Him by our confidence, even when everything is most dark and trying. Very beautiful was the answer of that grand old sea captain, who so long commanded a stately ship on the coast line service of the Atlantic. In a violent storm off Hatteras, a trembling woman hastened up to him on the rocking deck and the spray-swept bridge and asked, "Is there any fear, captain?" "No," he replied ; "no fear, but there is considerable danger." There was peril, but no doubt or anxious care; and when he came through that danger through the providence of God, he could witness that God was able to keep in perfect peace.

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