

Poor and Needy Sinners

By Ken Wimer

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Bible Text: Isaiah 41:10-14

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Shreveport Grace Church

2970 Baird Road

Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

Let me invite you to look with me in Isaiah chapter 41 and I want to read for us from verse 10 down to verse 20 and talk with you about what it is to be poor and needy.

We live in a society where being poor is a blight. You talk to people and in their economic standing, if they are very poor they always seem to be embarrassed by it. And that usually comes with comparing yourself one with another.

When you stop and think about it in reality, even breath is a mercy of God. To be brought into this world naked and to be clothed, even to have one set of clothes that you would wear is a mercy of God. We tend to forget that. And yet when we consider ourselves before a holy God to be called poor and needy I believe truly is a mercy, because what it does is it strips us of any pride. It strips us of any glory in ourselves. And so in all of our getting in life, let's not forget that all that we have comes from the hand of a merciful and sovereign God and especially in things spiritual. It is a blessing for the Lord to show us that we are poor and needy, because when he does that causes us to look outside of ourself, then, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you will notice in this portion of Scripture that I am about to read for you, these are addressed to people who were brought to that low estate of being poor and needy, utterly cast upon the mercy of God. And, you know, let's not wonder when the Lord brings us into such straights in our life, the word straight meaning very narrow, to where he strips us of everything that we thought we were and casts us entirely upon himself.

But in those moments, in those times we read even as he said here to the Israel of his day, his Israel, his people:

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the

LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.¹

So you can see how comforting a word this would be to sinners in distress. There is nothing worse than a self sufficient sinner. We are all sinners, but a self sufficient one, one that doesn't see their need. And until the Lord opens your eyes, that is what we are. We come into this world as self sufficient. In our mind's eye the world turns around us. And it is not until the Lord shows us who we really are that all of that is taken away. But the scope of these verses is to silence fear and to encourage faith, not in ourselves, but in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you ever fear? If we didn't, there wouldn't be those Scriptures like we read right here, "Fear not." You know, we ignorantly think sometimes that since the Lord has shown us of himself and knowing all we know of the Lord Jesus Christ that we will never fear. But fear is part of our nature. And left to ourselves that is what we do. Even those disciples that were walking with our Lord in his day, when the storm raged and he brought the storm. Let's not forget that. He was asleep in the boat, but all the while he brought the storm. Not so much to see how they would react. He knew how they would. But to cause them to see that left to themselves, they would most certainly perish.

And so the call here is to fear. Three times or fear not. Three times in this portion of Scripture that command is given. Verse 13. And you see it is always surrounded by who God is. This is not just saying, "Well, pull yourself up by your boot straps and quit being afraid." No, this is not a psychology class. This is one in which the Lord dealing in our heart causes us to look to him and here in verse 13 to says:

"For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."²

How many young children in the storm, lightning that run to their parents and gotten into bed with them? You know, it doesn't take away the storm, but it is sure comforting to

¹ Isaiah 41:10-20.

² Isaiah 41:13.

know that mom and dad are there to calm those fears. Here is the mighty God who says, "I will hold thy right hand saying fear not."

Again in verse 14, fear not. But notice the language isn't thou righteous one. There is no righteousness in us.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob."³

You know, just like any worm out there crawling on the ground, it is suspect to trouble and danger.

You say, "Well, it is the most defenseless creature you could find."

Probably so. All it takes is a car tire to run over it if it is trying to cross the road, someone walking along says, "Ooh, there is a worm," stomp it, you know? It has no defense. And most people look on it as worthless. Why even let it live? Of course, fishermen would take exception to that, but then they take it and poke it and put it on a hook and throw it out there in the water and if it doesn't catch a fish, it drowns. That is what a worm is for. And yet that is exactly the language that our Lord uses in those that he has purposed to save: thou worm, Jacob. But, nonetheless, fear not.

In other words, fear not the threatenings of the enemy. Think about the prophecy that Isaiah had to give here concerning the children of Israel that they would be taken away into captivity. A very fearful destiny that was being pronounced.

Aren't you glad we really don't have foreknowledge? How fearful would we be to know what the rest of this week is going to be like? The Lord mercifully keeps it from us. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. But you can see just how in spite of in our own minds thinking we are somebody. We are really nothing. It is the Lord that keeps us.

And the call here is, you know, doubt yourself, but don't doubt God. Don't doubt him. This is a call to look again to he who holds the right hand of his people.

It is interesting in Scripture. Even the right hand. It doesn't say, "I the Lord thy God will hold thee by my right hand." He does. That is Christ. But he says, "I will hold thy right hand."

So that shows that even... because right hand indicates strength and power. And even the greatest strength and power we think we have in a moment all that can be gone. And it is not us holding his hand, it is him holding our hand. Let's never forget that.

And then, again, down in ... there is one other time there where it was said fear not in the portion. We will come across it when we read it. The whole point here is that, you know, the poor and needy are such that first of all they need an all sufficient God and Savior. Let us always be reminded of that, that we think not ourselves more highly than we

³ Isaiah 41:14.

ought to think. And here the Lord speaks to encourage such. The poor and needy speaks to them as being that all sufficient God and Savior. Why so? Why does he say these words? Why does he speak this way?

Well, that our dependence would be upon his presence, our dependence would be upon his faithfulness as heirs of promise. These words here are not addressed just to everybody. When he is speaking here of thou worm, oh Jacob, he is speaking to one such as Jacob that he separated out. There was Jacob and then there was Esau. Jacob, he said, have I loved. Esau have I hated. And while he lets millions go their way, leaves them to themselves, there are such as Jacob, again, the name as we read it in verse 14 indicates supplanter and that is who the Lord is reminding them that they are, nothing but a supplanter. I know he says, “ye men of Israel,” that word means prince with God. But how was it that they were made to be a prince with God?

Verse 20 tells us.

“That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together...”⁴

Here is a oneness of mind that those that are the Lord’s agree upon.

“That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”⁵

There is not one that is the Lord’s that he has taught that is going to say that they had something to do with their salvation, that they have something to do with their keeping. Their testimony is going to be that of verse 20.

“...and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”⁶

That is how the heirs of promise and that is how those that are the Lord’s are described in Scripture. If you look over in Hebrews chapter six and verse 17 this is the Jacob of whom Isaiah prophesies these words, Hebrews chapter six. How strong. When the Lord says:

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”⁷

He is revealing himself to them as that all sufficient God and Savior. He is the God of all men, of all flesh. And yet he is the Savior of these that he has given to his Son. How strong is his promise? Well, in Hebrews chapter six and in verse 16 it says:

“For men verily swear by the greater...”⁸

⁴ Isaiah 41:20.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Isaiah 41:14.

⁸ Hebrews 6:16.

That is why when you go into a courtroom. I don't know if they still do it or not. They used to have you swear on the Bible to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You swear on one greater.

“...and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.”⁹

When matters are settled, it is settled by a judgment, any conflicts between men. If that is so, it says, verse 17:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel...”¹⁰

When the Lord says, “I will not forsake you,” he means he will not forsake us. He will not forsake his own. He will not lose one of all that he has purposed to save. Such is the immutability of his counsel. And he confirmed it by an oath. Not that he had to.

You know, when you read in the Old Testament a particular statement that is repeated twice, it is considered an oath. It is like you tell somebody, “I case you doubt, let me tell you again.” Now it would be sufficient for God to simply state it one time and it would be true. But knowing the weakness of our flesh, knowing even as regenerated sinners our eyes become smoke filled with the cares and concerns of this world, you read these Scriptures and if you are an heir of the promise, over and over and over again the Lord says, “Fear not, for I am with thee. Fear not. I will strengthen thee. Fear not. Don't be dismayed.”

You see? And that is what he is saying here. God willing. It is a shame that we often portray God as so unwilling. I think some of that comes from dark Calvinistic type teaching. He is presented in so many ways as a monster, as one that, ooh, you better watch out, that sort of puritanical teaching, you know, ready to lash out with bolts of lightning against any that would say or do anything against his sovereignty and his will and his holiness.

We know from reading in Romans that he is, it says, he is even long suffering with the vessels of wrath. Can you imagine if God were reacting to any one of us whether his own or not and lashing out every time we did something wrong or killing as soon as a person did something that was contrary to his holiness and justice? There wouldn't be anybody left alive. They would be all gone.

You know, his willingness here, more abundantly. How full those words are.

“...to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hebrews 6:17.

have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”¹¹

That is Christ. All that he said he will do, he has done through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is why he can tell his people, “Fear not.” He is, indeed, to the poor and needy an all sufficient God and Savior.

Are you weak? I am. He says, “I will strengthen thee.” Are you destitute of hope? How many times we are. You know, our eyes get clouded. We get burdened down. Even with not just the circumstances of life, but our own sin. It is a burden when you consider who you are as a sinner before a holy God and yet he says, “I will help thee. I will help thee in that time of need.”

Are you ready to sink, ready to fall? He said, “I will uphold thee with the right hand, notice of my righteousness,” coming back to our text here, the right hand of my righteousness. I will uphold thee, in verse 10.

Who is his righteousness? Has been always the Lord Jesus Christ. Until Christ came and paid the debt, he was God’s righteousness in his forbearance. He knew what his Son would do. He knew that in the fullness of time he would send for this son to pay the debt. And, therefore, he was forbearing with those that were his in the Old Testament. But he upheld them, even as he upholds us by the right hand of his righteousness. That is his Son. That is God’s righteousness.

Do you realize even in the New Testament it never speaks of Christ’s righteousness? Because Christ didn’t come to work it out for himself. He came to work it out for the satisfaction of his Father. And so that is why everywhere you read it in the New Testament concerning that work that Christ came to accomplish it is called God’s righteousness. God owns it. God is satisfied. He is the one that has been satisfied.

And there is no double jeopardy with God. If Christ paid it, when your sin overwhelms you in your mind and heart you are brought to see that even that Christ paid for, even that. And you rest. That is where the fear is taken away. It is in seeing that God is, indeed, open... or holding every one of his own up by the right hand of his righteousness, that just salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so he is, indeed, that all sufficient God and Savior. He it is that silences the fear. We don’t run to self help books. That can’t help you. They might like an aspirin, take a little aspirin and it makes you feel a little better, but you have got to get the root of it. There is something deeper here than aspirin. There is something deeper than self help books. There is something deeper even than men’s testimonies. I think I will go back and read how so and so handled the situation. I am telling you. We, by God’s grace, better be looking to Christ as poor and needy, as that all sufficient one.

¹¹ Hebrews 6:17-18.

You see down here in verse 14 the combination of these words. If Redeemer were not in the middle, what hope would there be? Because he says:

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD.”¹²

That is Jehovah God. That is the one that Hebrews says even Moses feared and quaked when he spoke. And then imagine if Redeemer were not in the middle, but all it said was, “I will help thee saith the Lord, the holy one of Israel.” That would be like your enemy because of your sin had... saying to you, “Come on. I will help you.” There would be no reason to trust, because being the holy one of Israel you would know that all you deserve was his wrath and condemnation.

Do you see how gracious the Spirit of the Lord is putting in their Redeemer? He is the one. He is the go between. Were it not for his blood being interposed, none of us could have anything but fear. None of us would, but fear. But he says, “The Lord, yes, he changes not. He has not lowered his standard. He is still the holy one of Israel. And yet the Redeemer.”

That is what gives us confidence in that he has worked it out. This was forward looking to that time when the Lord Jesus Christ would come and pay the debt and put away the sin of his people that the fear might be removed.

That is the Lord’s work to do. When he holds us by the right hand, he does so in that one who is the right hand of our righteousness.

But, secondly, not only do poor and needy sinners need an all sufficient God and Savior, but we need a strong and sure advocate. And I believe that is what we read here in verse 11 and 12. It is not that the Lord is just saying, “Fear not,” but he deals with our very enemy. When he says:

“Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded...”¹³

Now when Isaiah wrote this, it had not yet even happened yet. He was prophesying of what would happen. They would be taken into captivity. They would dwell in that captivity for 70 years. And yet it speaks here as if it were already done to show the certainty of it. And when he says:

“...they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.”¹⁴

Why? Again, because the Lord purposed to intervene. The Lord was their defender. No matter how formidable that enemy, no matter how insolent, no matter how fearful the enemy, the Lord is saying that the day will come when he will reckon with the enemies. He will do it.

¹² Isaiah 41:14.

¹³ Isaiah 41:11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Again, that is such a beautiful picture of salvation and representation. I am so thankful that I don't have to answer for my sin before a holy God, because God already did in his Son. It was free to me, but not to his Son. Grace is the effect of that sin debt being paid. We are not called upon to strive with our enemy.

We think of Satan. The Lord said, "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Christ dealt with him. Christ dealt with every accusation. And believe it or not, the most wicked creature in the world can still say the truth or tell the truth when it is to their advantage. Satan did. He will use things about you to bring to your conscience and mind that will bring you low and you have to say, "True." And yet as the accuser of the brethren, he has absolutely no authority to cause God to ever cast off any one of his own, because the Lord has paid for it. Justice has been satisfied.

And I read that in that sense, that all that were incensed against thee, whether it is sin, the world, Satan, think of the law. There would be no way that you could ever consider the law to be your friend unless Christ himself had satisfied it and brought reconciliation and standing in the gap. He did it. I am not called upon here to strive with the enemy. The Lord simply says in verse 11:

"...and they that strive with thee shall perish."¹⁵

Who is it that causes and makes alive and causes to perish? It is the Lord. So he deals with them. Those that war against them, those that hate us and would seek our ruin.

Now whether that fight is external or internal, there are external enemies that because of what the Lord has been pleased to teach us, they get their back up against you, because you don't give credence, you don't give credit to what they consider important, their works. Just like Cain became angry with Able. That would be an external enemy.

And if you look over in 2 Timothy chapter three and verse 12 this is a reality that those of us that are the Lord's, that he has chosen, that Christ has redeemed and upon his work being accomplished God has declared just and by his Spirit and his grace has called. We can expect the world, just like Cain versus Able, we can expect the world to be our enemy. And yet in all that we are not to fear.

Here in 2 Timothy three you can see Paul speaking here to Timothy in verse 10.

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.¹⁶

The Lord dealt with those enemies. But he says:

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”¹⁷

And it says:

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.¹⁸

He didn't learn them from Paul. He learned them from the Spirit of God.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”¹⁹

So those are the external evidence. To those who will live godly, those what will identify with the exclusive message of salvation by Christ alone and through his death and all the glory being to him, you could expect your religious friends in the world to be upset with you, because by taking that sort of stand you are, in essence, cutting them off. You give no credence to where they are, just like Abel couldn't budge. Even though Cain was angry at him, even to death he would not compromise, would not change. And so we have such enemies.

But the Lord deals with them. That is the Lord's to do.

“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”²⁰

We don't take men or their disputes on. We commend them to the Lord. But those are external. What about internal?

Look over in 1 Peter chapter two. I say it sometimes with a chuckle. When men find fault with you, it is usually on what they see, something you said, something you did, how you acted. They are upset at you. But don't you think down in your heart, boy, I am thankful they don't know the half. If they knew the war that was going on in here, they would really find a lot to chew on and talk about. But I am thankful the Lord doesn't give us over to the enemy. And yet I don't treat lightly what is going on in here.

In 1 Peter chapter two and verse 11 he says, “Dearly beloved...”

Look at how tender this is. This is a fisherman writing this.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”²¹

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 3:12.

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 3:13-14.

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 3:15.

²⁰ Romans 12:19.

I don't have time to focus on the enemies that are out here. I am aware that there is a greater enemy within me that if left to myself would cause me to fall into despair and dismay and that is my own flesh. And yet even in that, the Lord says, "I will be your strength." We don't strive with it. Whenever the Lord brings these enemies to mind, if we are his, it will cause our eyes to be turned away from ourselves to him, him who upholds us by his right hand. Because I will tell you. By his death there at Calvary, so perfect, so complete was the satisfaction of him paying the sin debt, that he has rendered those enemies as naught. I like that word.

"...they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish."²²

The Lord has already put it away. And so in that we rest.

Isn't sin a very formidable enemy if we had to deal with it ourselves in the law, a formidable enemy? When I read to you Matthew five a little while ago, that is what the Lord was doing. He was putting the law right back in the face of these that thought themselves to be something. He said, "You think you know about the law?"

You read it. We read it. It says not to kill, but if you so much as said to another worm, "Thou fool," you are worthy of hell's condemnation because in pride you have thought yourself better than that other and that is why you told him, "Thou fool." That is just one fool telling another fool, "You are a fool."

See, it is easy to see the fault in another, but oh to see it in ourselves and to be brought low at Christ's feet. It would shut our mouths for the Lord to truly show us. And yet all of that that the Lord has dealt with. When we say, "My sin is all taken away, away, my sin is all taken away," That is because the Lord has rendered it as nothing. Men can find it. Isn't it interesting how you can find it? It comes up in your mind. You go back and think about it and it again starts to bring you down? But look at verse 12.

"Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them."²³

If Christ has dealt with it in his death—and he has—and if that righteousness that he worked out has been put to your account, then it says:

"Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought."²⁴

That is an amazing thing when you consider that God would look upon a poor needy sinner and see nothing but righteousness, see nothing but the righteousness that his Son

²¹ 1 Peter 2:11.

²² Isaiah 41:11.

²³ Isaiah 41:12.

²⁴ Ibid.

worked out and has approved to be accepted in the beloved. Such is the state of everyone that is the Lord's and if he is redeemed.

Well, there is a lot more here. We will come back to it next time, the Lord willing. Now the Lord God is the defense of the poor and the needy in Christ and how he is the comfort and how he supplies every necessary grace. For the poor and needy. So that is going to be, Lord willing, part two.

All right, brother Mike.