

Don't Fear—Listen to the LORD

Isaiah 51:1-16

Halifax: 28 November 2010

Introduction

The LORD knows you.

- You are His people whom He has called to be His own, yet it is His wise and loving purpose that you should remain in a fallen world for a time.
 - Although this is the best place for you to be to prepare you for a more blessed eternity,
 - He knows that you become weary and discouraged here.
 - That is why He comes to you with words of comfort...
 - And that is why He keeps coming back to you to comfort you again and again.
 - We have seen Him doing that ever since we got to chapter 40 of Isaiah's prophecy—and actually quite a lot before that!
- Last week, He addressed the problem that we have when, in our weariness, we seem to think that God has abandoned us...
 - that He has rejected us...
 - that He has divorced them or sold us as slaves or something...
- You remember how He comes to us and says,
 - “Show me the certificate of your mother's divorce!”
 - “To which of my creditors is to which I have sold you?”
 - How absurd that God should have a creditor!
- But the truth was that God comes to us all along in our weariness...
 - He comes and calls to us as His people, but no one responds to Him!
 - No one, but one!
 - The One that Isaiah calls the Servant of the LORD—the One we know as Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!
- He came with opened ears to hear God's will!
 - He studied that He might be able to know how to speak to us in our weariness!
 - And He was shown that if He was to have a true message of comfort for us sinners, He, who knew no sin, must go to the cross and bear our shame and guilt.
 - And in His great love to the Father and to us, He was not rebellious!
 - He went and He gave His back to those who struck Him and his cheeks to those who pulled out His beard.
 - He bore shame and spitting—all that He might come forth with true comfort for His weary people—with a message of true hope and forgiveness.

There are only two responses to this...

- two very opposite responses...
- There are those who fear God—who believe that He is truly God, holy and mighty...
 - And they see that they are in desperate need of God’s grace and forgiveness...
 - As soon as they hear the servant’s voice of comfort, calling them to trust in Him, they come—
 - even in the midst of their weariness and darkness, they come and hold to Him for life.
- Then there are those who respond to the weariness of this world by trying to light their own fire and walk their own light.
 - A desperate picture is given of them trying to walk in the light of sparks that are extinguished as quickly as they ignite...
 - But they go on in this way, rejecting all that the Servant did and avoiding Him.
 - If this is what you are doing, the Lord tells you what the dreadful outcome will be for you...
 - He says,
 - “This you shall have from my hand—you shall lie down in torment!”
 - It is a dreadful prospect—
 - to lie down is to stay in torment forever—
 - all because you would not come to the LORD Jesus when He called you to come to Him in your weariness!

But now as we move on into chapter 51, the LORD has nothing more to say to those who wish to walk in the light of their own sparks.

- He leaves them to go on in their own way.
 - But He comes to those who have responded to bring the comfort He promised to them.
- From your response to the sermon last week,
 - Most of you are in that category.
 - You are those who fear the Lord and obey the voice of Jesus—and even though you are weary and in the darkness,
 - you are pleased to keep on looking to the LORD for His grace!
 - You realise, as Peter did in John 6, that there is no other place to go!
 - Jesus has the words of eternal life and no one else does.
 - You realise that there is no other source of true comfort and hope.
 - You have no desire to walk in your own sparks.

Oh how the LORD loves you, weary souls who look to Him!

- His love is seen in His great earnestness in this chapter!
 - He knows how easily you get distracted and forget to hear His word which is essential for you to keep up your faith in this weary world...
 - See how He comes to you, right from the start, and says to you:

I. “Listen to Me!”

A. Do you see how urgent He is about it?

- Three times He says “Listen to Me.”
 1. Each time He addresses those of you who are looking to Him—who have come to Him for His grace...even if you still feel that you are in darkness.
 - a. He says it the first time in verse 1.
 - Isa 51:1: "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the LORD:"
 - Are you among those who are following after righteousness?
 - The idea is that you are pursuing righteousness because you know that you don't have it and you want to have it!
 - You want to be filled with it—you want to be what God wants you to be!
 - You are tired of your sin, tired of your reluctance to serve, tired of your fears, tired of your selfishness, tired of how quickly give up!
 - Your greatest struggle is not with what the people around you or with your circumstances so much,
 - but with what you are!
 - You are following hard after righteousness because you want it!

TRANS> If that is you, the LORD calls you to listen to Him!

- He has a message of comfort for you to let you know that you are not seeking Him in vain.
 - We will look at that message in a moment,

- But first I want to drive into you the simple fact that you must listen to Him.
- b. In verse 4, He tells you to listen to Him a second time:
- He says:
 - Isa 51:4: "Listen to Me, My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation:"
 - With these words, He is not addressing all of you who are in His covenant,
 - the covenant in which He promises, saying, "I will be your God and you shall be my people."
 - He calls you "my people" because you are set apart from those who refuse to seek Him.
 - He calls you "my nation" because you are part of His kingdom of righteousness that He is establishing in the earth.
 - When Isaiah wrote this, that kingdom was confined to the nation of Israel,
 - but now it pertains to all those who are baptised in the name of Jesus Christ around the world.
 - You are, as you are told in Peter, God's holy nation!
 - But you see that you need to listen to Him!
 - That is what you are and that is good, but you need to listen to God.
 - There are some who are in the covenant that do not listen to Him and that have never obeyed the voice of His servant Jesus...
 - They are outwardly in the covenant, but they are not really among His people because they have never really come to Him.
 - But here He is speaking to those who truly are His people.
 - Though you have come to Him for salvation, you do not always listen to Him as you should—
 - and you need to listen to Him... so He says to you this second time, "Listen to Me!"

TRANS> Are you starting to get the message?

- It is essential that you listen to Him if you are to go on in His grace and comfort
 - If you do not listen, you will start to go astray...
- c. And then in verse 7, He tells you to listen for the third time!
- It is a matter of great urgency so He says it again...
 - Isaiah 51:7: "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law:

- This time, He addresses you as those who know righteousness...
 - You know what true righteousness is!
 - You are not playing games as so many do, pretending that you are righteous when it is so obvious that you are not!
 - You are not making up some half-baked standard that you can keep and refusing to admit your sin.
 - No, God's law is in your heart!
 - It addresses you to very core of you, and you yearn to obey it... not just externally, but from the heart!
 - You yearn to love the LORD your God with all your heart and that is what you live to be and to do...
 - You yearn to love your neighbour even as Jesus has loved you.
 - You yearn to be the wife or the husband or the child that God calls you to be...
 - It is in your heart to do the will of God.
 - As we saw in verse 1, you pursue this righteousness...
 - You pursue it because it is in your heart, put into your heart by the powerful working of God.
- Is that true of you?
 - If it is, then God is telling you to listen to Him.

TRANS> Three times He has told you to listen!

- He is persistent with you, not because you are outside His kingdom,
 - But rather because you are in His kingdom...
 - If you are walking in your own sparks and going your own way, He has nothing to say to you...
 - the comfort here is not for at all... not until you repent and turn to the Lord for righteousness...
 - But if you if you are pursuing Him and His righteousness, if you are part of His holy nation, if His law is in your heart,
 - He has these wonderful words of comfort that He wants you to hear.
2. The Lord knows that what you must listen to what He says here if you are to be comforted.
- Too often, busyness of life and the problems of life crowd out His voice so that it is not heard.
 - Instead of turning to His word at these times when we need it most, we go on without listening to Him!
 - It is so foolish... but we say that we are too discouraged to listen to Him!

- We are in the darkness and we have no light—so we are going to avoid the only true source of light?
- How stupid!
 - He has the words of life that you need to hear!
 - He has words that can comfort you and minister to you in your need!
 - As such times, more than ever, you need to listen!
 - Three times He tells you listen!
 - So listen!

B. Listen to the three-fold message of encouragement that He gives to you here!

- Listen and receive!

1. First, He tells you to consider your origins—in verses 1-3:

- Look first at verses 1 & 2 where He says:
 - Isa 51:1-3: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him."
- a. He is using the language of a rock quarry here to remind His people that they came from Abraham.
 - Nothing more needs to be read into the language than the simple fact that God's holy nation came from Abraham and Sarah.
 - The significance of this is that God blessed Abraham and increased him when he and Sarah were barren!
 - There was no way that Abraham could become the father of a great nation because he and his wife could not bring forth a child—and they were well past the age of childbearing!
 - God did this to show that His holy nation is not something that we can produce.
 - It is only of His grace and by His power that there should be a kingdom of righteousness.
 - It is His work to raise up this kingdom in this sinful world.
 - And God did bring forth a nation from Abraham!
 - As it says, He “blessed Him and increased Him!”
 - It was the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes!
- b. And we who live after the coming of Christ can see this even more than the people of Isaiah's day did!

- Galatians 3 tells us that all those who are baptised in Jesus' name are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise!
 - Not only did barren Abraham bring forth Isaac and Isaac Jacob and Jacob the nation of Israel who were God's covenant people until Christ came...
 - But now God has made believers from the nations of the world to be Abraham's seed!
 - It all began with this one man who had worshipped idols and who was barren...
 - He did not have what it took.
 - There was nothing promising about him at all...
 - But there was God's promise and here we are, a part of a great worldwide kingdom of righteousness!
- c. You may not feel that you are very promising either as you look at yourself...
- 1) How can I bring forth children for God?
 - How can I, who am barren, be fruitful.
 - How can I be what He has called me to be?
 - You are not promising, but God has promised and He calls you to listen to Him and believe!
 - That is the encouragement of Abraham!
 - 2) Verse 3 tells you that whatever you are now—whatever the church may be now—however unpromising we may be—He is going to bless us!
 - Isa 51:3: For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.
 - It is His work in us as we pursue His righteousness and seek His face!
 - He is going to comfort us!
 - We may be as barren as a desert, but He is going to make us like Eden—His own garden bearing fruit that pleases Him!
 - He is going to fill us with joy and gladness, just as He gave laughter to Abraham and Sarah by His impossible grace!
 - A garden of praise will spring up from the wilderness of this world!
 - Brothers and sisters, we who are barren are going to be fruitful and we are going sing!
 - Isn't that encouraging?
 - Listen to what your Lord is saying to you here!

TRANS> And now look at the second encouragement He wants you to listen to...

2. In verse 4-6, the encouragement is given that God's righteousness and salvation will eventually fill the entire earth!
 - a. God addresses His people and His nation, but He speaks about the other nations obtaining His blessing:
 - Isa 51:4: Listen to Me, My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation: For law will proceed from Me, And I will make My justice rest As a light of the peoples.
 - This idea of the law proceeding from God is what is spoken of in Isaiah 2 where we are told that the nations will come to learn of God.
 - Remember how it said,
 - Isa 2:3: Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
 - This is not just a matter of justice being established so that they "get what's coming to them—their just deserts!"
 - This is the nations repenting and turning to the service of God.
 - The words the LORD uses in verse 4 are very lovely when he says:
 - "I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples."
 - This reminds of Psalm 72 where it speaks of justice coming upon the nations like dew on the grass...
 - The nations will be watered by His justice—justice will rest in their land and they will be fruitful and green for God!
 - b. In verse 5, He makes it very clear that His salvation will accompany His righteousness with the end results that even the far away nations will trust in His strength.
 - Verse 5 says: My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, And My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait upon Me, And on My arm they will trust.
 - No longer will the nations rely on their own wisdom and strength.
 - No longer will they be like Babylon when she was content to have prosperity and peace without righteousness...
 - They will obtain the blessed new life that only the LORD can provide through His saving arm.
 - c. The earth in its present state of corruption as we know it along with all those who do not receive God's salvation will be dissolved.
 - That is what we are told in verse 6:

- Isa 51:6: Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.
- The LORD tells us to look at the heaven and the earth...
 - It seems like it will endure forever just as it is, but it is not so.
 - It will vanish away like smoke along with the wicked and there will be a new order of the things that will endure forever...
 - The new order will be established by God's salvation that always produces righteousness wherever it goes...
 - A kingdom of righteousness with a new heaven and a new earth will be left behind to remain forever when wickedness and the curse are at last purged away.
- What an encouragement this is for those who care about righteousness!
 - God's nation (His kingdom) can seem so small, so insignificant, so imperfect.
 - Wickedness and the curse can seem like it is here to stay, but it is not!
 - God has plans to abolish them and He comforts you by revealing these plans to you.
 - Only God's righteous kingdom will remain.

TRANS> And because this is so, the LORD has a third encouragement that He wants you to listen to in verses 7-8.

3. It is the encouragement that we do not need to be afraid of wicked men who cast reproach upon us because we know God and have His law in our hearts.
 - a. It says:
 - Isa 51:7-8: "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, And the worm will eat them like wool; But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation from generation to generation."
 - b. It makes no sense to be afraid of those who oppose us for having received God's righteousness when we know that we will last forever!
 - When God gives us righteousness, He also gives eternal life.
 - He has gathered us into Jesus Christ to live by His righteousness forever.
 - People naturally hate this righteousness and they call those who have it evil.
 - They cannot bear to have it brought up to them by our presence that righteousness and salvation is only from the LORD.

- They do not want to face their guilt.
- They are much more comfortable denying it, but the very presence of those who trust in Christ keeps reminding them of it.
 - That is why they can become so violent and hostile toward you when you follow Christ.
 - There were more martyrs for Christ in the 20th century than in all other centuries combined.
- Don't think that it is because you have done wrong (unless you have).
 - Do not be afraid of them.
 - To often, we let their insults and their opinions influence what you believe and what we do.
 - We tone down what God says because they intimidate us.
 - But don't you see?
 - Their reproach and their insults will be destroyed along with them, but the one who does the will of God will endure for ever.
 - Take heart!
 - The LORD is with you and He will bring you into His Kingdom.

TRANS> What comfort the LORD has for us!

- Even for us when we have grown weary in this world and are in the darkness with no light.
 - What reason we have to keep on trusting this God who has such encouraging words for us!
 - What good reason we have to keep listening to Him!
 - How He loves us to speak such gracious words to us in our struggles and weakness.
 - What promises He has given to us for our encouragement!
 - But how ought we to respond to Him once we have heard these encouragements?
 - A proper response is provided for us in verses 9-11...

II. It is for us to plead for His promises in earnest prayer!

- We are not told if this is the response of Isaiah or the response of the people who pursue righteousness that the LORD has just been addressing...
 - But it is certainly the way we ought to respond if we are among God's people.
 - These promises we have just heard are from our loving Lord to us.
 - And this is the response we ought to have!

A. We ought to begin by turning to the LORD and saying:

- Isa 51:9: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD!”
1. This is an earnest prayer for God to do what He has just said He will do.
 - a. We don’t suppose, of course, that He is really sleeping...
 - It is just that we do not see Him doing what He has promise right now, so to us it is as though He is sleeping!
 - 1) When His people were in captivity,
 - They did not see Him multiplying them because He wasn’t just then.
 - Neither did they see Him turning the nations to His salvation—it seemed rather that many were turning away.
 - Nor did they see Him wiping out their enemies who reproached them.
 - 2) Neither was this what anybody saw when Jesus came...
 - He had only a tiny company of followers...
 - Even when His light shined upon His own nation, they were darkness and the darkness did not comprehend the light.
 - And instead of Him destroying His enemies, He Himself was destroyed by His enemies.
 - 3) And sometimes it seems that way with us.
 - What has happened to all these wonderful promises?
 - We are not like Eden. We are not like a fruitful wilderness—we are full or struggles from the curse...
 - We do not see the gospel going forth as we would desire.
 - Nor do we see our enemies grow old like a garment—instead they seem to prosper even as they persecute us.
 - It seems like God is sleeping.
 - b. But when it is like this, it is for us to call upon Him with earnest prayer!
 - 1) That is how you can spot a true believer!
 - When things are going contrary to God’s promises, he starts pouring out ardent prayers to the Lord!
 - “Awake, awake! Put on strength arm of the LORD!”
 - It is a cry that God would do what He has promised.
 - 2) Remember that we walk by faith and not by sight.
 - That means that instead of judging what God is going to do by looking to see what He is doing right now,
 - We judge what He is going to do by looking to His promises.

- And to keep our faith strong, we pray that He would do as He has promised.
 - It is by prayer that we lay hold of His promises and receive the encouragement of them.
2. The arm of the LORD that is spoken of here is very likely a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- He is the One that God sends forth from heaven to save His people from their sins.
 - When God awakes, He sends Him forth to act for us and to do whatever needs to be done to bring about His salvation.
 - We have the privilege of living in the days after He has been openly revealed in the sight of the nations.
 - Because this is so, we always pray that we and the people around us would know His salvation.
 - We know that He has shed His blood to atone for our sins and that He pours out His Spirit to transform us.
 - So we look to the Father awaken and to send the Son to act for us.

TRANS> This is the earnest plea that we ought to make when we have heard God's promises.

- But that is not all...

B. In making these prayers it is also good for us to encourage ourselves by looking at God's mighty acts in the past.

- We are so easily discouraged.
 - Our faith needs to be strengthened by looking back and remembering how God has kept impossible promises in the past.
 - That way, we will be assured that He will do it again!
 - If we lose our confidence, our prayers will be weakened.
 - We will become discouraged, and our service to God will wane.
 - Thus the prayer continues in verse 9 and 10 with these words:
 - Isa 51:9-10: Awake as in the ancient days, In the generations of old. Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, And wounded the serpent? Are You not the One who dried up the sea, The waters of the great deep; That made the depths of the sea a road For the redeemed to cross over?
1. The great work of God that the people of Isaiah's day had to look back upon was the Exodus from Egypt (Rahab is Isaiah's nickname for Egypt).
- a. For over 400 years, Israel had been in bondage in Egypt,

- helpless and unable to free themselves to serve God.
 - Through these years, they had the promise of deliverance, but it seemed as though God was sleeping.
 - But those who had true faith among them, those who sought righteousness, cried out to the Lord for what He had promised.
- b. And the LORD showed them that there was no barrier that could prevent Him from bringing His people to Him.
- He put on His strength and by His mighty arm He opened the sea for them.
 - He made a path for them through a way that before had been completely shut up to them.
 - Just think how amazing it must have been to have been there!
 - You have all stood next to sea—even if it is just at the tip of Point Pleasant Park looking across the arm...
 - You would not think of being able to just get through on foot.
 - But God just opened up and made the ground dry for them!
- c. Let this be a powerful reminder to all of you—in whatever it is that seems impossible that God has promised...
- He is able to make a way out for you by His mighty arm—by Jesus!
2. And now we have this greatest of all works that God has done to make a way through insurmountable barriers for us.
- a. The whole world was cut off from God by our sin...
- God had come to Israel and made them His people, but even they still had this problem of sin that kept them on the other side of the veil from God.
 - How could there ever be a way for us to come to Him when our sin and guilt stood as a barrier?
 - The sentence of the law rung loud and true against us...
 - “The sinful soul, it shall die!”
 - What could ever be done?
 - There was a promise of forgiveness and the people of faith plead for it, but how could it be fulfilled?
 - There was this barrier that cut us off from God.
- b. Our mighty LORD showed, as He did at Egypt, that no barrier can keep Him from bringing His people to Himself...
- He stretched out His mighty arm, even Jesus, the Son of God, to redeem us.
 - Jesus came into this world, born of virgin though He was the Son of God,

- And He took the curse for us.
 - On the cross, He bore the full weight of the curse so that we could be forgiven!
 - And God accepted His sacrifice for us and raised Him from the dead, endowed with the gospel of forgiveness and salvation for the nations!
 - The veil that separated us from God was torn in two!
 - The way into the holy presence of God was opened!
 - God, by His mighty Arm, made a way for us through the barrier that sin had erected so that we could come to Him forever and ever!
 - He dried up the sea that separated us from Him!
 - He made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over!
 - Have all of you taken this road?
 - I hope you have because it is the only road by which we may come to God.
 - You don't think God would have offered His only Son on the cross if there was some other way to Him, do you?
 - It is mind boggling that He even did such a thing!
 - Who could have ever even dreamed of it!
 - But this is what He did.
 - And now we sinners can come to God.
 - We were so shut off, but now there is a path for us!
- c. And if our Lord has done all this,
- Is it reasonable for us to doubt Him when He tells us that we shall be restored to Eden and that the nations will turn to Him and that our enemies will vanish away like smoke?
 - If He spared not His only Son, will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
 - Is there any reason to doubt, even in the midst of our deepest struggles that He will do all that He has spoken?
 - Nothing will keep us from Him and from His fullest blessing!
- C. Having encouraged yourself by remembering what He has done in the past, it is for you to affirm your hope in His promise...
- Verse 11 is an affirmation or a confession of hope...

- Isa 51:11: So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
1. Israel in Babylon could be sure that just as God had brought them out of Egypt, so He would bring them out of Babylon.
 - They would return just as God had promised.
 - Even though it seemed impossible, they could be assured that God would make a way for them and that their joy would be made full!
 2. But we know that the deliverance from Babylon was not as glorious as this suggests...
 - They came back to Zion, but the sorrow and sighing did not flee away.
 - They still had many enemies and many sins and many trials to bear.

TRANS> So is this just hyperbole?

3. Was the Lord just exaggerating by using these glowing terms?
 - Not at all!
 - All through the prophets, He uses the return from Babylon to speak of more than the return from Babylon!
 - He looks at His deliverance from Babylon as a step in His redemptive work that will lead to the blessed future He has for His people!
 - It is a step along the way on a staircase that will lead to glory.
 - They were brought out of Babylon because they were His people,
 - And their final destination is the kingdom of Jesus Christ and His righteousness and salvation.
 - They will get all that they were promised...
 - And so will we who hope in Christ today!
 - The ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
 - His kingdom will come and will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Pray that it will be so!
 - Call upon the LORD to Awake and put on His strength!

III. You can be sure that the blessing will come because God Himself is the One who gives you this comfort.

A. This is not wishful thinking...

- There is not a lot of substance to comfort that comes from someone who tells you that “everything will be okay” when they have no way of knowing that!
 - It may be of some comfort that they care for you, but there is no substance to the comfort itself.
 - But when God speaks promises to comfort you—that is something you can count it! You have every reason to be comforted by it!

- 1. God Himself is the one that comforts you with the comforts we have seen today!
 - In verse 12 He reminds you that these are His comforts for you!
 - Isa 51: 12 "I, even I, am He who comforts you.
 - You see how He stresses the fact that He is the one who has spoken these things to us!
 - There is no doubt about any of it!

- 2. That being so, you have no reason to fear man.
 - They will not be able to keep God from doing what He has spoken.
 - God knows how to deal with men who just die and who are like grass that we tread upon.
 - verse 12 continues:
 - Isa 51:12-13: Who are you that you should be afraid Of a man who will die, And of the son of a man who will be made like grass? And you forget the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth; You have feared continually every day Because of the fury of the oppressor, When he has prepared to destroy. And where is the fury of the oppressor?
 - For Israel, it was men that they feared—
 - It was Babylon that held them with such a tight grip that they did not see how they could ever get free...
 - And the LORD says,
 - I am the LORD!
 - I made the heaven and the earth!
 - Why are you afraid that these oppressors?
 - They cannot prevent Me from saving you.
 - And what is it that *you* fear?
 - What is it that you see as an insurmountable barrier to keep you from God?
 - Is He not God?
 - Can He not make a way through the sea? Through Babylon? Through the barrier that sin has made between us and God?
 - Have you forgotten who He is?

- Well remember!
- Remember right this minute and don't forget again!

TRANS> All these promises are from Him...

- He is the one that comforts us with these promises.
- And because it is Him, we can be sure of them.

B. He reminds you that He is the LORD so that you will be sure of Him.

- In verse 15, He says:
 - Isa 51:15: But I am the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared—
The LORD of hosts is His name.

1. As you can see, this is very much an echo of what we already were taught to declare of Him in our prayer of faith...

- that He is the one who made a way through the sea for His people.
- But here the LORD repeats this fact for us because He knows how hard it is for us to believe when we are in the middle of difficulty and affliction!
 - He knows that these truths need to be reinforced for us again and again if we are to truly be comforted.
 - We need to keep being reminded of the great things He is able to do by remembering what He has done.

2. And you see that He also reminds us that He is the LORD our God and that the LORD of Hosts is His name.

a. By saying that He is the LORD our God, it reminds us of His covenant promise to be a God to us and to our descendents.

- Because He is our God, He will not allow us to perish.
 - He will do all that is required to bring forth our complete salvation, for to do less than that would bring reproach on Him
 - as if He could not save His own people!
 - as if He did not keep His promises!

b. And by saying that He is the LORD of Hosts,

- He reminds us that He is the one who rules over all things—He is the almighty.
 - Nothing has its being or moves a muscle apart from Him.
 - As the LORD of Hosts, He has absolute dominion so that every force is made subservient to Him.

- Now put this together with the fact that He is our God and you have the One who rules over all things using those all things for our salvation!

- All things are subservient to our salvation because God makes them so.
- Be comforted, be assured, that He will do all that He has promised because of who He is!

TRANS> But not only does He remind you that the comforts we have seen are from Him.

- Not only does He remind you that He is your God and that He is the LORD of Hosts,
- See that also...

C. He reminds you of the plans He has for you as His people so that you will be comforted.

- This is brought out to us in verse 16...

1. First He says, "I have put My words in your mouth."

- God has given us His very own word through the prophets, and now we have this word in Scripture.
 - He has, as it were, placed it in the mouth of His people and He commands His ministers to preach it for the comfort of His people.
 - The scriptures are very word of Christ, God-breathed, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.
 - This is not the words of men, it is the very word of God!
 - Find comfort and patience through the scripture

2. Next He says that He Has covered us with the Shadow of His hand.

- That means that He has protected us—and kept us for His purposes.
 - He does not let anything happen to us that would destroy us or keep us from being brought to the final goal of salvation...
 - Not if we are truly His!
 - He is our shield and our defence!
 - You remember how we saw before that the Servant of LORD knew that He would not fail because the Father would help Him!
 - Well the Father keeps the whole church—Jesus keeps us—and the gates of hades will not prevail against us!

3. And now we are brought to the climax...the goal that the LORD has for us!

- The LORD tells us here that He gives us His words and shelters us with His hand so that He might bring us forth as His people at last!
 - His goal is take a people for Himself out of this fallen world and bring them into His blessed salvation—
 - to reveal them at the end of it all as *His own people!*

- Look at what He says in verse 16:
 - Isa 51:16: And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”
- He is planting a new heaven and laying a new foundation—for us! for His people!
 - This is His great work in this fallen world!
 - This is the kingdom that Jesus told us He came to establish where righteousness dwells!
 - Jesus is the foundation!
- God is making the world over again and we who have come to Jesus for salvation are part of that make-over!
 - The present world order is wearing out.
 - It will be destroyed...
 - But in this world God has planted a kingdom that will last forever and established a foundation for it that cannot be shaken!
 - The curse and all the wicked will be removed and sent to their own place... as we saw last week, the wicked will lie down in torment.
 - But God has sent Jesus to make a way for us to return to God!
 - And we will return to Him and there will be a new heaven and new earth with no more curse for us!
 - And then God will say to us!
 - “You are My people”
 - He will say it in the very fullest sense because that is what we will be in the very fullest sense!
 - God’s people!
 - Perfectly blessed!
 - Perfectly holy!
 - Perfectly happy!
 - In perfect communion with our God forever!
 - He comforts us now with His words and keeps us for that glorious day.
 - As Peter says, we are...
 - 1 Peter 1:5: kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
 - Do not fear, listen to the LORD who comforts you!