

Isaiah 41:1-29 (NKJV)

¹ "Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, And let the people renew *their* strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; Let us come near together for judgment.

² "Who raised up one from the east? Who in righteousness called him to His feet? Who gave the nations before him, And made *him* rule over kings? Who gave *them* as the dust to his sword, As driven stubble to his bow?

³ Who pursued them, *and* passed safely By the way *that* he had not gone with his feet?

⁴ Who has performed and done *it*, Calling the generations from the beginning? ' I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I *am* He.' "

⁵ The coastlands saw *it* and feared, The ends of the earth were afraid; They drew near and came.

⁶ Everyone helped his neighbor, And said to his brother, "Be of good courage!"

⁷ So the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith; He who smooths *with* the hammer *inspired* him who strikes the anvil, Saying, "It *is* ready for the soldering"; Then he fastened it with pegs, *That* it might not totter.

⁸ "But you, Israel, *are* My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.

⁹ *You* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, 'You *are* My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away:

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Have you ever gotten into a melancholy mood and looked at the big picture? Maybe you looked at your life, and the days you have lived, and the things you have done and you have wondered- **am I significant?** Do I matter? Does my life really have any meaning? Does my life play any important part in the living and dying of life on this planet?

We are going to see truths in God's Word this morning that might surprise us. Our world is growing more and more agnostic. They **don't know** if there is a God or not. But even if there is, they have concluded from the evil in this world that God does not matter because God does not care. God is not involved.

Dorothy Sayers put it this way:

In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair... the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Dostoevsky talked about the implications of removing God from day to day life: "Immortality of the soul does not exist, therefore there is no virtue, therefore everything is permitted."¹

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

That is our world is it not? I have been thinking a lot about virtue lately. Virtue does what is right only because it believes it is right and nothing more. It is willing to give up one's pleasure, one's advantage, one's comfort, even one's life because it is right to do the right thing. It knows the consequences but does not allow negative consequences to dissuade it. Right matters so much that true virtue will give up anything to do right. Virtue is exceedingly rare. And it is very sweet to see it. Apart from God there is no reason for virtue, except the pseudo virtue that arises from human pride.

When we take God out of day to day life, even our professed "Christian" day to day lives, we lose our reason to live a godly life. If God does not care about what happens to me today, if God does not control what happens to me today, if God will not assure that nothing happens except for my good, I only have a reason to **live for myself**, by my own rules, looking out for my own best interest.

But if there is a God who is intimately involved in my day to day life, all of my excuses, all of my nonsense falls to the ground.

Our passage this morning, as such, is very very important to our day to day living. It will address the idea of our significance. It will address the reason for true virtue and obedience.

¹ "Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, And let the people renew *their* strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; Let us come near together for judgment.

What is this talking about?

God is calling the Gentiles here into a conversation. The judgment this is referring to is the **judgment people do** when they are making up their minds. Judgement and discernment are good words, no matter what political correctness tries to do with them. God is inviting people into a discussion with Him. To what purpose? We may see it in the phrase- **let the people renew their strength**. Remember we looked at this last week. This was referring to those who are given strength to do the things God was calling them to do, things that are in God's will.

God is calling people into relationship with Him. And they are gentile people. They are "us" people.

And it is a little odd. They should shut up. They should keep silent. Until they determine to come into relationship with God, until they are willing to do serious business with this God.

² **"Who raised up one from the east? Who in righteousness called him to His feet? Who gave the nations before him, And made *him* rule over kings? Who gave *them* as the dust to his sword, As driven stubble to his bow?**

³ **Who pursued them, and passed safely By the way *that* he had not gone with his feet?**

⁴ **Who has performed and done *it*, Calling the generations from the beginning? ' I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I *am* He.' "**

It is important that we get the enormity of this concept. The question is "Who done it?" This is like a mystery book. And we are to answer the question. Now what is the question about?

The question is, "Who raised up Cyrus as a political leader who would conquer Babylon?" Who equipped him for power? Who prepared the world stage for his conquests? Who smoothed the past for his success?

Now if you asked Cyrus, he would probably say, I will tell you who did it. I did it. I am superior to those around me. I am wiser or more skilled or more powerful or persuasive or cunning. Human pride always does that. Human pride is always looking to take credit for the good and cast blame for the bad.

Now if you asked some of our Christian brethren they might say, well only the devil would do such a thing. God would never play a part in something so violent and reckless. God cannot intervene in the free will of man, they would say.

But oddly enough, that is not what God says. God says, I will tell you who did it. I did it. The alpha and omega did it. The one who has a plan from start to finish did it. And it happened exactly as He planned. No one missed a cue in their part in this play. Everyone performed exactly as God had in mind.

No one killed one of His precious people accidentally. No one did anything to a single child of His that He did not have planned.

Does that mess up your view of God. Well then maybe your God is too small or too much made in your own image. This is how God describes Himself and His actions.

Do you catch the amazing implications here? Do you see what this means about your life? **God is involved in the details. God is in charge of those who appear to be in charge. God is in charge of those who seem to be against you. God is in**

charge of those who appear to be **for you**. God is in charge of the what happens to your children or your parents, to your bank accounts, to your health, to your safety. He is involved. And from the beginning of scripture to the end we are told what He cares about. He cares about His people. **We are significant to God**. Our well being matters so much to Him that He is exceedingly active all the time making sure that only **that which will benefit us for eternity will happen**.

Do you feel like God does not care, like God has not paid enough attention to what you need, like God has given up on you or what is best for you? If you are a child of His, that is all seamer theology. It is all the nonsense that comes from our flesh when we refuse to exercise the self control of our minds. It is that histrionic nonsense that is simply disbelief in high drama.

God cares about His people. And God is controlling every single one of their circumstances. That is what we are picking up here.

God says- **I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I am He**. That is intended to be a great comfort to His children. He is saying it is Me who is in charge of your circumstances. If you trust me, you will have peace when facing your circumstances. If you don't you won't. There is nothing real complicated here. It is pretty simple.

Now how does the world react to what it sees?

⁵ **The coastlands saw *it* and feared, The ends of the earth were afraid; They drew near and came.**

⁶ **Everyone helped his neighbor, And said to his brother, "Be of good courage!"**

⁷ **So the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith; He who smooths *with the hammer inspired* him who strikes the anvil, Saying, "It *is* ready for the soldering"; Then he fastened it with pegs, *That* it might not totter.**

This is how disbelief responds to world events.

When people are afraid, it always drives them to something. The greatest uniting factor is a common enemy. And fear always shows **us** what we believe and it always drives **us** to believe in something.

Mr Ortland says this:

I think it was G. K. Chesterton who said, "When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing; they believe in anything." That's true. When fearful people lose their sense of God, what do they do? They join together to construct their own meanings, their own myths. And the artificiality of it all is the world's guilty secret ([Romans 1:18-32](#)).

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Look what this is saying. The world is afraid about an enemy that threatens life as it is. So what do they do? Do they look at all the facts and consider world history? Do they look for a people who has continued to exist throughout history even though the odds against them were impossible? Do they look for a God who claims to be the one true God? For the most part, no. They say, what can we come up with in our imaginations? What can we create that will save us? And then they pass on tips in the idol manufacturing chain to come up with the perfect solution.

And look how they encourage each other with false hope. They say “be of good courage.” Why? Because they can come up with an **idol** that will deliver them. That is what humans always do. And we seem to have an unending supply of idiotic things to try that will save us.

Now that is a horrible thing with the world, but it is even worse when Christians do this. The world threatens us. There is danger. We may lose some things in this life that are important to us. And what do we do? Do we run to God? If we are faithful we do. But if we are fleshly we turn to one of the world’s solution. Maybe we choose pleasure. Maybe we choose escape. Maybe we choose denial. Maybe we become fatalistic. But these are all human created solutions that never ever ever work. The answer? Isaiah’s answer. Forget the idols. Forsake anything that you can create. Run to God. Trust God.

And that is the alternative solution that Isaiah is about to present. Here is the logical factual response to those things that are most threatening to us. It doesn’t matter what they are. They are things that look to do us harm and it looks like God doesn’t care.

⁸ "But you, Israel, *are* My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.

⁹ *You* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, '*You are* My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away:

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

This is the message every single one of us needs to believe when something in life threatens us. And look at the reasoning.

When Isaiah says you are my servant, the sentence starts with a but. This is contrast to the people who trust in idols. So the focus is not as much on the word “servant” as the word “MY”. We are God’s **possession** and His **idea** and as such

He will be sure to take care of us. That is the most important thing about us- **whose are we.**

Here we see that God's people were singled out by God in all human history and all human populations. This is true of the Jewish bloodline and it is true of individuals as well. You are a person that God singled out in all human history. Oh, you are not alone. There are lots more. But you are in a minority in the world's population. The Israelites were the biological offspring of several people that God had chosen. There was both Jacob and Abraham. We are spiritual offspring of them if we are believers. We were adopted into that family. But we are still as "in" as the naturally born kids.

The point is, if God went out of His way to pick you, that says something very important. You cannot look at that as an insignificant fact. You can't allow your strong feelings to overshadow this fact. If you are a child of God's, He takes ownership of you.

And then look what comes next.

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Tell me this. How much sense does it make to think that God controls what happens with **heathen people** who he is using **as tools to do what He wants** even when He is not concerning Himself with their best interest, but God is going to **lose track of what is happening to the apple of His eye?** That would be absurd. Again, this is not some Hallmark greeting card sent to someone who is fat and happy. No this was sent to people who were under a ruthless world power. They could see visible predictable danger. They could see things that made them feel stupid if they **didn't** fear. When we take what **we** fear, it probably pales in comparison to what **they** feared.

The word for fear in our text holds with it an idea of reverence. It is as if what we fear is what we worship. Maybe that is why it is such a big deal in scripture. We cannot fear our circumstances and fear our God at the same time. We will allow one or the other to focus our thoughts and hearts. It makes sense that Jesus would tell us to fear Him instead of anything else.

The second word for dismay is interesting. It contains the idea of looking around for help. All of us have probably felt panic from time to time. In the business world it often happens when we forward an email without reading what was said earlier in the string. Or when we send it to the wrong person. We instantly feel a frantic need to do something. Our eyes dart around for an escape route, for

something we can do or someone who can help. That is what this is talking about. He is saying don't panic. Don't allow your mind to pursue that path. God is clear. He says don't fear. Why? Because the world is not as bad as we think? Nope. Because we are much stronger than we think? Nope. We don't fear because **we are in relationship with a true and living God who loves us.** Look at these wonderful promises.

I am with you. I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you. Do you believe this? The New Testament makes these claims as well. This is true for all of God's people, past present and future.

It is important that we get this. God declares Himself to be in relationship with us. And that is the reason we are not to fear.

He says **I am with you.** It is good for us to remember that Immanuel, one of the names for Christ means God with us. We have the Holy Spirit who is God with us. God promises to be with his evangelizing people to the ends of the earth.

When we pray, "God be with someone", what we really mean is help them experience the truth of what already exists. Help them believe that God is with them and receive that comfort. God **promises** His presence. He may remove His **fellowship** until we confess our sin that is breaking fellowship. But He never removes His **relationship**. If we are His child, He will not withhold his fatherhood from us.

God is with us. All the time. I am sure we make Him cringe and grieve way more than we should. But He is present. It is a promise. We can take it to the bank. You don't need to **ask** for this. You can **claim** it. What we need is more of His unbroken fellowship. What we need, and have been asking for, is to give God more of our attention, more of our worship, more of our heart, more of our obedience. We need more fellowship, not more relationship. Just like we need to be more sanctified. But we don't need to be more Justified. Our relationship like our justification is once and done. But our fellowship like our sanctification ebbs and flows.

So **God is with us.**

I am your God.

I think the focus in context is saying that I am the God that causes. I am not your God because you choose to worship me. In context this is in a list of things **God is doing for us.** He is our God because **He has chosen us** to be His servants. He is not saying I am the best option of all the gods. He is not saying, historically I have been the God of the Jews. No. He is saying you are my people because that is what I have done. I am God and I made you mine. Now I am your God.

As I was studying this I felt a weight off my shoulders. God is not my God **because of me**. God is my God **because of God**. I don't have what it takes **in myself** to be faithful to the end. But God does. I don't have the power **in myself** to overcome the sin that so easily besets me. But God does. My **making it** doesn't ultimately depend upon me. It depends upon God. He is my God. And He will get me there. And that is true of all of us. Our love for Christ should compel us. But fortunately our success does not depend on **our love for God**. Our ultimate deliverance is guaranteed by **God's love for us**.

I will strengthen you.

This is the third time in a very short time that God has talked about providing strength. Do you get the idea that maybe this people really felt the need for God's strength? The truth is anyone trying to live a godly life is in constant awareness of the need for strength. And we most feel the **need for strength** when we fail by trying to rely upon **our own strength**. There is a principle here for the Christian life. We are going to **need** the strength that comes only from God to live the life that only glorifies God.

Let's look at how Paul describes that. How do we live in God's strength?

Ephesians 6:10-20 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

¹¹ **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

¹² **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.**

¹³ **Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

¹⁴ **Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

¹⁵ **and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

¹⁶ **above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

¹⁷ **And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;**

¹⁸ **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--**

¹⁹ **and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,**

²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We don't have time to go deep into this truth, but some things stand out in this process of putting on the resources of spiritual power.

We gird our waist with truth

We take the shield of faith with which we will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The sword is the word of God.

It is good for us to ask God to strengthen us. Many of the saints of God have called out to God for strength. But we are foolish to pray for strength and not do those things that God says we are to do **to have strength**. And much of it has to do with simply knowing and believing what God said and acting as if it is true. It is faith with which we do the battle in our minds. The devil shoots just one fiery dart, one lie. That is what the fiery darts are. He says, Look. You really want this. No one will know. You have got to have this. Look how pleasing it is. Don't worry about the consequences. Just do it.

And in our human strength we are toast. But if we will do what Jesus did when He was tempted, we will pour a bucket of water on that flaming threat. We will believe what God says and not what our seamer says. We will exercise the faith God gave us on the word of God that God gave us. And we will see that we really **do have strength** to succeed, to overcome.

And how do we know which we are choosing? By the outcome. If we believe what God says, we do what God says. If we don't, we don't. The strength we need is always available to us. God will strengthen us. He promises it. And we play a part in that process. He will not do for us what He commands us to do. And He will not command that we do what only He can do.

I will help you.

This is the same idea as the Holy Spirit being the paraclete. Most often the word is used by people in scripture who are in impossible situations. They are made by people who really need help. In fact, in some instances they will be destroyed if they don't get it. But they hold out. They are committed to only receiving the help that comes from their god. They won't allow their idols any ground here. They are resolute. Look at what David says.

Psalms 121:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills-- From whence comes my help?

² My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.

- ⁴ **Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.**
⁵ **The LORD *is* your keeper; The LORD *is* your shade at your right hand.**
⁶ **The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night.**
⁷ **The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.**
⁸ **The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.**

There is something exciting about actually deciding to trust God no matter what. Do you know what I mean? Those times when you pray and really trust God to handle the thing. You determine that you will no longer interfere. You no longer feel the need to make it go the way you want it to go. You no longer worry. You stop looking for other alternatives. You just trust it with God. Suddenly your faith is real. You know that this is **how it is supposed to be**. And no matter what you are suffering, you experience a piece of knowing it is in the best hands possible. And you know that God will truly do what is the best thing for all concerned. That is the helper that **God is to us** if we will only trust His help. I suspect we might all have a story of where we have done this. And I doubt any of us have ever done it perfectly. But all of us can give the same testimony. God knew what He was doing. And His help was better than the help that anyone else could ever provide. Will you trust Him to be your helper this morning? Will you trust your situation or your burden fully into His hands. He is the one who said it. Not me. He said **I WILL HELP YOU**. What part of that do we find hard to understand. He will ultimately help us to do that which He wants done. And us being faithful is what He wants done.

And last for this morning-

I will uphold you.

The word for uphold is to hold fast, to support, to attain.

The opposite would be to allow to fall, to fail, to slip away.

This is how Paul said it.

2 Timothy 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² **For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**

And Jude says this

Jude 1:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,**

²⁵ **To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.**

Isaiah says God will uphold us with His righteous right hand. The point is again, not about physiology but about power. The reference to the right hand is that normally **that is our strongest hand** and it is the one we focus our greatest attention with. In other words God has us in the best position to protect us, to provide for us, to keep anything ultimately bad from happening to us. Remember how we started this morning. We were talking about our significance. I believe we have our answer. We have seen just how important we are to God. He sure is going out of His way to both **take care of us** and to **tell us that He will take care of us**. He is both communicating and delivering His care. We saw earlier that if there is a God who is intimately involved in my day to day life, all of my excuses, all of my nonsense falls to the ground. And that is precisely what Isaiah showed us about God. He holds Himself out as being the greatest provider of the things we need most. And He is actively doing it in the here and now.

Do our lives reflect this solid confidence? Do we really believe it? Really? Here is the answer to many of our dilemmas. Here is the remedy to many of the flaming demon darts at our heart. We have a God. That God owns us. He bought us at a great price. He chose us from the beginning of time. We are loved. We are significant because we are significant to God. We are not great servants but we serve a great Master.

How is your life different because you believe this? How would the rest of the areas of your life look if you would choose to believe it for those parts that give you so much trouble?

Really, when the God of the universe promises I am with you. I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you, what excuse can we really come up with for our failure? About the only thing we can say about our failure is, that is all good, but I want to do what I want to do.

Let's commit to applying this truth to our lives this week. When we see behavior that is not becoming to our Savior, can we ask- How do God's promises set me free from this behavior? And then act.