

Fear Not

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Donald Lamont

[0 : 0 0] with me now for a little time as we seek to meditate together in a portion we have read from the word of God. The prophecies of Isaiah chapter 41 and reading again at verse 14.

Fear not thou worm Jacob and you men of Israel, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. To comfort and encourage the weak and the faint-hearted among the people of God is one of the foremost principles of divine religion. God himself is greatly concerned with this matter. We find that he gives attention to it again and again in the scriptures of truth. Take for instance these chapters we have here in the prophecies and writings of the prophet Isaiah. The prominence that we find given to this theme of bringing comfort and alleviation to God's people. Chapter 40 for instance commences on this note.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem. the, and we find that the chapter ends on the same note. Verse 29, he giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Chapter 41 is full of this theme as we saw in our reading. Verse 10, fear thou not for I am with thee, be not a slave 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. And the words we have for our meditation and then at verse 17, 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. We find that chapter 42, that it proceeds along very similar lines and chapter 43 even more so. Beginning with these words, but now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, thou art thou not overflow thee. And as this is one of the foremost concerns of God himself, so it should be one of the leading duties of the church of God and the people of God, to comfort and to encourage and to strengthen such as are fearful and weak among the flock.

It is a duty divinely imposed upon the church. In chapter 35 of this prophecy itself, and at verse 3, we are told to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of fearful heart, be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense. He will come and save you. This is what you are to say to those who need to be strengthened and encouraged.

[3 : 4 9] Our blessed Lord and Savior himself frequently engaged in such a ministry, in such an exercise as this in the course of his life on earth. We hear sentiments coming from his lips, such as these, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me, in my Father's house. There are many mansions. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might at least in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. And one great reason why God thus comforts and encourages his people is simply this, that they in turn may become comforters themselves.

The apostle, there is a clear teaching I think of the apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 3, where he writes, Blessed be the God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort any who are in trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. And this is how duty suggests the apostle himself again in Romans 15. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. And so it is the matter that God is so concerned with, and therefore it is the duty with which his church and people should be concerned with also.

As we look at these words for a little together, we'll first of all bring before you the reality of fear. Now fear being forbidden in scripture testifies to its reality. It may be sinful, you say, it may be wrong to express, to have fears, but it is real. That is what we have to face up to. We may be wrong and we may be doing wrong in being of a fearful heart, in being afraid and timid and having misgivings about the way things are going in our own lives or in the life of the church. But it is a reality that we have to face up to because scripture makes, brings it so clearly before us. What occasions fear, you ask?

Well, I think, for one thing, fear is awakened by the fury of the powers of evil. In verse 11 of this chapter, the prophet makes reference to those who were incensed against the church. They, behold, all they that were incensed against, they shall be ashamed and confounded. In the next verse, he makes reference to those who were contending against the church. And this immediately brings to our notice what, of course, cannot be denied.

That the world is engaged in a mortal conflict between the powers of evil and the powers of good. In a general sense, this is true. The powers of evil are wielding tremendous power and showing tremendous energy.

[7 : 36] And when we see the influence of the powers of evil, then it tends to awaken fear in the heart of the Christian. He perhaps begins to ask himself the question, will evil eventually overcome the good?

Will evil dominate the sin of this world? If this should happen, what are we to do? But there is not only this general sense in which there is this power of evil and the power of good engaged in a mortal conflict, but more particularly there is the effect which sin has on the individual life, the power which it is wielding within the life and within the heart of the individual believer. There is a real reason for fear.

A fear that it may overwhelm one day and overcome. Fear may be awakened, and is, by the fury of the powers of evil. And then fear may be awakened by the sense of personal impotence. In old text, there is reference made to the one Jacob and men of Israel.

Now, this term is not used in a derogatory sense, not at all. The Christian could well believe, could well confess, admit that he could use this in a derogatory sense when he sees his own sin, his own feelings, his own feelings. But that is not the sense in which it is used here. But in the sense of being weak, in the sense of being impotent, in the face of the influence which evil wields in the world, in the light of the demands which are made upon him to thresh those mountains and to make the hills as trough, he looks upon himself and to make the hills as trough. He looks upon himself and sees his utter weakness, his helplessness.

Who is sufficient for these things? And it may well kindle, it may well awaken a sense of fear within his heart. This feeling of personal impotence and weakness in light of what is required of it.

[10 : 12] And such fear as this may be, of course, awakened by the ravaging power of unbelief. Remember that unbelief is always being exercised in the Christian life against God.

It is always against God that unbelief expresses itself. It is always in relation to God that your unbelief and mind expresses itself.

You remember that this was the very first attack that the devil made on our first parents. Hath God said to show the seed of doubt in their minds? Hath God said, you may not eat of the tree?

Hath he really said that? Raising the seed of doubt and misgiving in the heart? And that, of course, is what unbelief always does. Has God spoken such words? Has he really said this? Or have he said it?

Does he mean that you should take that for yourself? Yes, it is all right for others, but should you take such a promise as this? Should you appropriate a promise so wonderful as what God has spoken here?

[11 : 29] And so this may cause, may occasion fear in the Christian heart, the ravaging power of unbelief. But there is something else that may occasion fear also, and that is the seemingly impossible task to which the church and the individual believer is called.

You are called upon to crush the mountains and to make the hills a trap. You are called upon by God, yea, commanded by God, to go into all the world and attack that mountain of evil that you see around you.

Those hills of iniquity that are everywhere in society. No less duty is imposed upon the church of God and the individual Christian composing that church.

And when the individual believer looks out upon this massive task, what does he say? It is impossible. Impossible that such a weakling should make the slightest impression upon such a task as this.

It is impossible. And it may awaken fear within the heart. But then too, I think, something else that may kindle or awaken fear is the appearance of defeat and failure.

[13 : 05] When we look and conclude that perhaps because of our own conduct or because of the conduct of others, there is defeat and failure looming on the horizon.

So it was in the case of the great Old Testament prophet Elijah that he cast himself down by the wayside and wished that God would end it all.

I am no better than my fathers. He concluded that all his efforts had ended in defeat and in failure. And that may happen in our own consciousness and our own awareness of how things may be happening within our families or within the community of the church or within the community of society.

And so I say there are many things that may occasion fear. It is something that is a reality, a dread reality if you like.

But this is the reality of Christian experience. And if it were not so, God's word would not so frequently be making reference to it. The reality of fear in Christian experience.

[14 : 15] The second principle thing I want to underscore is the command to desist from being afraid. Fear not, thou worm Jacob.

On more than one occasion, on very many occasions in the course of these chapters as we saw already, there is this command given to us by God. God is not simply exhorting his church and people in these words.

He is actually commanding them to desist from being afraid. And he says you are not to be afraid because of several considerations.

And it is important to notice what these considerations are. If we would desist by the grace of God from being afraid in any of the circumstances of life or faith, it is, I think, tremendously important that we should understand why we are not to be afraid.

And we are not to be afraid because, for one thing, of God's presence with us. Always. Fear not, for I am with thee.

[15 : 29] Be not dismayed. I am thy God. And the fact that this is written evidences that frequently it is questioned by God's people.

If it were not doubted, if it were not questioned, it would not be written. You question in an hour of weakness whether God is in reality with you.

And yet he himself is saying quite categorically, I am with you. And that is one major reason why you should not be afraid, whatever the occasion you fear.

There is no circumstance in the life of the Christian believer when God is not with them. There are many occasions when God may be displeased with them.

And when God's anger may be against them. And when God may have to severely rebuke them because of his sin and because of his conduct. But never an occasion when God is not with them.

[16 : 36] Because he has himself categorically stated, I am with thee. I will never leave thee. And I will never forsake thee. And so this is one good reason why you should not be afraid.

This is one good reason why God commands his people not to be afraid. Because God's own presence is with them in the various situations and circumstances of life.

And we are not to be afraid not only because of God's presence with us. But, says the prophet, because of God's upholding. And that's the same verse.

I will strengthen thee. Yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee. With the right hand of my righteousness. I will be with you.

In the particular circumstances in which you find yourself. You remember how he speaks. Again in the 43rd chapter. At the beginning of the 43rd chapter.

[17 : 40] When thou passest through the waters. I will be with thee. Through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned. Neither shall a flame kindle upon thee.

Why? Because I am with you. I am upholding you. My presence is with you. My grace is being made your sufficiency.

My grace is sufficient for you. And my strength is made perfect in your weakness. One good reason why you should not be afraid. And why God commands you not to be afraid.

Because of God's upholding of us. Another good reason why he commands. And why the Christian should not be afraid. Is God's encouragement to us.

As we find ourselves engaged in conflict. In verse 11 it says. Behold all they that were incensed against thee. Shall be ashamed and confounded. In other words you will overcome the conflict.

[18 : 43] He encourages the timid heart to continue. He encourages them to prevail in that contest. To engage manfully in what he is called upon to do.

He encourages them to take to him the whole armour of God. So that he may be more than conqueror. And he will be because God encourages them.

To believe that this will be the ultimate outcome of the conflict. And God commands not to be afraid. And we are not.

As ourselves not to be afraid. Because God's. Because of God's tender care for us. Notice how tenderly and graciously and condescendingly.

He speaks in verse 13. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand. A father speaking to his child. A father comforting his child if you like.

[19 : 49] Have you noticed a child meeting an obstacle. He is walking by his father's side. And how he will take. Or how his father will take his hand. And help him over that obstacle.

That is the picture. That God gives us here. Of his dealings with his children. I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand. Of course he will.

If he didn't hold your right hand. Then. You would stumble the very next moment. There is no way. That you could negotiate that. Obstacle.

That you would overleap that war. It's by my God. Says the psalmist. Assisting me. That I overleap. Every war. Every obstacle. In the course of life. And in living. And so God commands.

Not to fear. And we are not to be afraid. Because. God's tender care. Is always there. And we are not to be afraid.

[20 : 46] Because of. God's. Knowledge. Of us. What is those words. The uses. To which. I have adverted.

Before. In our text. Thou warm Jacob. You men of Israel. In other words. God. Is saying that. I know your weakness. I know your frailty.

I know your character. I know everything about you. I know that this is your conclusion. With regard to yourself. You are utterly infant.

You are utterly weak. You are but a man. You are fallible. And you are ready to fall. And ready to fail. You have done so. So frequently in the past. You will do so. No doubt again.

But I know this is God. I have perfect knowledge of you. And that. Is something. That ought to be. A tremendous. Matter for encouragement.

[21 : 40] For strengthening. To the weak. And the fainting. That God knows us. All together. And you are not to be afraid. Because of God's.

Cooperation. With us. I. He says. Will help thee. In that saying there. Verse 14. I will help thee. Of course.

It is he who. Does everything. Is it not? God. But here. He is speaking. In such a way. That the individual.

Christian believer. Would never overlook. His obligation. Although he is ready. To acknowledge. That it is by God's grace. And by God's strength.

That he can achieve anything. He is never to dismiss. The fact. That he is obliged. To act. As if it were dependent. On himself. But God here.

[22 : 37] So condescendingly. Speaks. And that. He is almost saying. I will cooperate with you. I will help you. I am commanding you. To be active. But I will help you.

And it is by his grace. And by his strength. That that help. Comes always. That it reaches to your life. And it reaches to your heart. Whatever the circumstance. Of life may be.

Whatever fears. And misgivings. You may have. About duty. About. About what is happening. Now. What will happen tomorrow. Or what will happen. The next year. And so he has good reasons.

For commanding his church. And his people. Not to be afraid. Not to be of a fearful heart. Not to give way. To despair. And.

Dejection. And utter rejection. The third principle thing. I want to emphasize. The reason. The reason. The basic reason.

[23 : 35] Why we should. Not fear. And it is. Not simply. Remember. Because. God commands. That.

Would be. In itself. Sufficient. That. Would be a sufficient. Reason. For not being afraid. For not being fearful. Because God commands. Because whatever. God commands. It is our duty.

To engage. In it. To do it. Without asking any questions. But it is not only. That God commands. But also. Because God promises. God promises.

Behold. He says. I will. Make thee. In verse. For. In verse 15. Behold. I will make thee. And you shalt threshing.

Instrument. Having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains. And beat them small. And shalt make the hills. A chop. Thou shalt fan them. And the wind. Shall carry them away. And the whirlwind. Shall scutter them.

[24 : 29] And thou shalt rejoice. In the Lord. And shall glory. In the Holy One. Of Israel. God promises. To do. Certain things. And because of this.

He says. You will thresh. The mountains. Although you may have. Such a lowly esteem. Of yourself. You will thresh. The mountains. Although you. May imagine.

That. It is the most unlikely. Event that can ever happen. Yet. Praise God. You will thresh. The mountains. You see. This is literally. What the.

Despised. Little earthworm. Does. Underground. It is. Threshing the mountain. It is working.

Assegiouly. In the dark. Cultivating. The soil. Making that soil. Porous. So that it will receive. The. You.

[25 : 24] The showers of heaven. That it may produce. Growth. And fruit. This is. What is commanded. Of this little creature. And it carries on. Its work. Night and day.

In its own corner. If it could possibly happen. That reason. Were given to that earthworm. And it. Was brought forth. To. The side of the mountain. And show on the mountain.

And say. This is what you have to do. Earthworm. You have to. You have to remove. That mountain. You have to thresh. That mountain. Would it not despair? But it doesn't ask questions.

It has that. God gave it. Instinct. Whereby. It. Proceeds. In its own little corner. To carry out the work. Allotted to it. And this.

Is the promise. That God. Gives. As here. I will. Make you. A new. Sharp. Threshold. Instrument. And this is what will happen.

[26 : 22] You will. Thresh the mountains. When the church. And the people of God. When they are sent out. Into the world. To thresh. The mountains. Of evil.

And sin. And wickedness. Then it is something. That appears. On the surface. To be utterly. And totally. Impossible. Who is sufficient.

But this is what you will do. And this is what will ultimately happen. In the providence. Of God. You will thresh the mountains. You will. Make the hills. Chuff.

So that that evil. And that wickedness. Will one day be swept away. Utterly. Totally. And forever. What a glorious prospect.

For this evil world. In which we are living. And witnessing my friends. That an end is going to come to this. That it is going to be swept. From the face of God.

[27 : 17] And from the face of creation. That all the evil. Against which you are. In conflict now. Will one day. Be. No more forever.

Because evil itself. And wickedness. Will be. Lodged. Into. In a. Pit of darkness. And will never. Show itself again.

You. Will. Thresh the mountains. You will make the hills. Chuff. And then. You will rejoice. In the Lord. Isn't that grand? The God.

Who has made you. A new. Shows. Threshing instrument. You will rejoice. In him. You will give the glory. And the honor. And the praise. To the God. Of all grace.

Who strengthened you. With might. By his grace. And by his spirit. So. That in that strength. And by him. By his spirit. You. Thresh the mountains. You made the hills. Of chop.

[28 : 14] And you went on. To glory. In you. Jehovah God. But in the light. Of. This promise. In the light of this.

Marvelous promise. And what. Will be affected. By the. Christian believer. Through this promise. And yet. My friend. By continuing. To be afraid.

What are you doing? By continuing. To be afraid. In the light of such a promise. As this. And such a command. As this. What are you doing? Well. You are for one thing.

You are doing this. You are doubting. God's ability. To do. What he has said. He would do. You are reflecting. Upon the ability.

Of God. To do. What he says. You are to do. What you will do. You are not bringing. This honor. Upon yourself. Or upon anyone. You are bringing.

[29 : 10] This honor. Upon God. In continuing. To be afraid. In the light. Of such a command. And such a promise. As this. You are doubting. The ability.

Of God. But not only. Are you doubting. The ability. Of God. You are also. Questioning. The integrity. Of God. You are questioning. Whether he has spoken.

These words. What he has given. Such a command. Or such a promise. And yet. As God said. And shall he not do it. Has he spoken. And shall he not make it good. Is it at all possible.

That he is. Mocking his church. And mocking his people. When he speaks. Such grand. Commands. And promises. As these. But by continuing. To be afraid.

In whatever circumstance. Confronts you. You are simply. Questioning. The integrity. Of God. Not only so. But you are also.

[30 : 05] Querying. God's willingness. To act. As he has promised to act. His willingness. To bestow strength upon you.

His willingness. To be by your side. To hold you. By the hand. His willingness. To be your strength. And you stay. In every circumstance of life. His willingness.

To do. What he has committed himself to. Isn't it sad. That we should act. In this way. When we should act. In this wrong manner.

Of being afraid. When so many. Great and gracious. Commands and promises. Are given to us. By God. Himself. Love. And so then.

As we. Wind up. What lessons. Are conveyed to ourselves. If any. From this beautiful passage. Of scripture. Well standing.

[31 : 01] Very much at the forefront. There is this. Very important lesson. This very practical lesson. And that is the. The folly. Of being fearful. And timid.

How foolish a thing it is. To be fearful. And timid. Of what use. Is it. To be afraid. What use. Can.

Being fearful. And timid. Bring to your own heart. And to your own life. Only to make you. Weaker. And weaker. By the hour. And by the moment. It is going to. It is going to achieve nothing. For God's glory.

And for God's cause. There is the utter folly. Of being fearful. And timid. In the light. Of what scripture is saying. And what God is speaking. To his church and people.

In such words as these. But not only. Is there this lesson. The folly of being fearful. And the folly of being timid. But there is also. Another practical lesson.

- [31 : 58] And that is the. Imperativeness. Of being strong. In God. Yes. Weak in ourselves. Frail in ourselves. Impotent in ourselves. Saying to ourselves.
- I have no strength. But at the same time. And with the same breath. Saying. In thee. Is my help. I have no ability. To do anything.
- Commanded of me. But all my hope. And my confidence. Is placed in thee. Alone. And so it is utterly imperative. For the Christian church.
- And the Christian believer. To be strong in God. And in the power of his might. And when we are then. We shall readily take to us. The whole armor of God.
- So that we may be able to stand. In this evil day. And when we have done all. To stand. And then there is this. Very practical lesson also.
- [32 : 54] Following from. The sentiments. And that is the need. For being active. And persevering. Because it is commanded. We are commanded.
- To be active. As I said a moment ago. To take the whole armor of God. To fight the good fight of faith. To lay hold upon eternal life. To persevere.
- Against the. Powers of darkness. And he. In whom this good work. Has commenced. Will. He will bring it forth. To the day of Jesus Christ.
- And it is by his grace. And by his strength. That we shall. Continue to persevere. And continue to be active. In the work. To which.
- We. Have been called. And so my friend. Here is. What. You are required. Here is what is required of you. Fear not. Whatever fears.
- [33 : 50] And misgivings are. Overwhelming you. This morning. Whether they be. Whether they relate. To your. Work. To your ongoing work.
- Whether they relate. To your family. Whether they relate. To the work of God. Whether they relate to. Something. That you cannot. Tell anyone. Here.
- Is what you are. Called upon. How you are called upon. To exercise yourself. Fear not. It is God. Who is speaking. It is God. Who is addressing you. Fear not.
- I am with thee. Fear not. You warm Jacob. He may not be fear. I know you. I know your feelings. I know how you are. I know your weakness.
- I know everything about you. And in the light of this. I still say to you. Says God. Fear not. There is no occasion. No reason. Why you should fear.
- [34 : 46] Because the God. Who is for us. Is infinite. In power. And in glory. And so. Who can. Be against us.
- Amen. And may God. Add his blessing. In our meditation. Of his words. Shall we unite in prayer. O Lord our God.
- We bow. Before thy holy word. We marvel. That thou. Dost speak. Such gracious. And such condescending.
- Words to us. In order to strengthen. Our weak faith. And to encourage. Our frightened hearts. May we take. Thy word.
- As it comes to us. May we be enabled. To lay it up. In our heart. And may we be given. To practice it. In our life. As we go on. From this day forward.
- [35 : 44] May we believe. What thou art saying. May we never dishonor thee. And grieve thy spirit. By disbelieving thee. By refusing. And rejecting.
- What thou art speaking to us. Hear us. O God. We beseech thee. Continue with us. Go to our respective homes. With us. And watch over us. And come out again. Into our midst. To glorify thy name.

Amongst us. At the evening service. And thou shalt have all praise. Both now and forever.
Amen.