

**CALVARY PANDAN  
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 41**

**ISAIAH**

**CHAPTER 41**

**Theme:** "The Incomparable Comfort of God!" (Part 2)

**THEME VERSE**

**Isaiah 41:10** (KJV) "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."

**INTRODUCTION**

The focus in this chapter of Isaiah is a continuation of the previous chapter. The focus is still on the comfort of the LORD upon His people. The entire chapter runs very rapidly through in its prose and is filled with the LORD's words of encouragement. Israel has nothing to fear for the LORD is with Israel. The fear of uncertainty and of the enemies can be very crippling even to the people of God. The LORD's presence is with His people. They never have to fend alone against her enemies.

The assurance of companionship in times of loneliness and desertion by all is most comforting. Israel or Judah stands alone in this conflict against the

superpowers of the world. This has been and will always be the position of all of God's people throughout the ages. It is the people of God against the world at all times. This result is inevitable. The LORD God will always be at odds against Satan. There can never be any concord or fellowship between Christ and Belial. Therefore, the people of God who stand on truth and righteousness will find themselves assaulted by the Evil One at all times.

There will be no let up. These incessant attacks cause the people of God to tremble and become fearful. These attacks are both physical and spiritual for through the physical attacks, the mind and heart comes under attack as well. The LORD assures all believers throughout the ages to keep on obeying and hold on to the truth of God and never compromise. God's people have nothing to fear.

The LORD will not only punish the enemies of Israel but will also strengthen Israel in the process. The enemies will see that the LORD has strengthened Israel against her foes. Israel does not need to fear or tremble in the face of her greatest danger. The LORD will defeat all enemies. The idols of the enemies of Israel are nothing in the sight of the LORD. Their power lies only in what the people give to them in their blind devotion. Such powers of men are futile. Sinful men do not have any real power at all other than what they give to one another! Real power lies with the Creator God who is the Protector of Israel! Therefore Israel must never fear. Look

at fear in the face and smile for the LORD is with you and will never leave you comfortless.

### OUTLINE

1. Islands, be Quiet! (vv.1-9);
2. Fear Not Israel! (vv. 10-20);
3. Idols Be Gone! (vv. 21-29).

### COMMENTARY

#### Islands, be Quiet! — 41:1-9

**Verse 1** – The LORD commanded that all islands keep silence before Him. These islands have to refer to Gentile nations that surround Israel. Their remarks about the destruction of Israel must stop. Let these Gentiles (the people) renew their strength if they think that by renewing their strength they could fight against God, let them try. Let them come near to the LORD and they will see the wrath of God as never before. Let them speak, "Let us come near together to judgement" all they want, but they would all be in vain. The rule of majority is futility before God. They would never succeed. That is why it is advisable to take heed of the LORD's warning for them to be quiet!

**Verse 2** – Using a rhetorical question the LORD emphatically made His point clear. The LORD said, "*Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?*" Who is this righteous man from the east that the LORD had already raised up? It has to be

Abraham. It is not a reference to the future as some have intimated that it could well be Cyrus the Persian monarch which would rule after the Babylonians. He was not righteous in the sight of the LORD even though he was used by the LORD to do His will in restoring Israel back to the Promised Land in years to come. Abraham fits the description better. The LORD raised up the righteous man i.e. Abraham from the east to found the nation of Israel. He called Him to His foot i.e. to do the LORD's bidding by leaving the Ur of the Chaldees for a land he did not know until he arrived at the Land of Canaan. He remained there for the next 100 years of his life till he died. He passed on his calling to his son Isaac who in turned passed it on to Jacob (Israel) until the nation was born.

In the days of Joshua the nations were given to him i.e. Abraham's descendants. They conquered the Promised Land and occupied them till this day of Isaiah. They ruled over kings like the Gibeonites and other kings who paid them tribute after the conquest. There were none who were able to defeat the Israelites. They were as the dust to his sword and as driven stubble (i.e. dry straw) to his bow. The ease in which Israel defeated these foreign kings is emphasized here by the use of these two illustrations.

**Verse 3** – The descendants of Abraham i.e. the Israelites pursued their enemies and passed them safely i.e. easily without loss of lives. They were able to overwhelm their enemies

easily and with no danger to the Israelites. The Israelites passed safely through their enemies even in places that they had never been to before. If they had defeated their enemies easily in places that were familiar to them then they would have had an advantage. However, when the enemies were easily defeated in places that were unknown and unfamiliar to them it goes to show the ease of their defeat.

**Verse 4** – Using the rhetorical question, the LORD reveals to all readers the real reason for the resounding defeat of the enemies of Israel. He asked, "*Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?*" Who was the One who did them all from the very beginning of Israel's birth? I the LORD, the first and with the last is the One who did it. In other words the LORD did them all from the beginning to the very end. He had always been watching over Israel. The LORD identified Himself as, "I am He."

**Verse 5** – The isles saw what the LORD did. The isles here refer to the many Gentile nations. They saw and they feared. They feared the power that the LORD demonstrated in His protection of Israel. The ends of the earth were afraid. They drew near and they also came. When they heard of the greatness of the LORD via His protection of Israel, nations from far came together to make alliances to encourage themselves so that they might not be so afraid of the LORD!

**Verse 6** – They helped everyone his neighbour and they said

to one another, "Be of good courage." This is the way of common man. Making alliances and treaties with one another against a common foe is usually the name of the game. It is true now and it was true then even in the days of Isaiah. The sinful had always drawn strength with numbers. They call this democracy today. It is the power of the people that man had always wanted! However when it comes to fighting against the LORD manpower is useless power.

**Verse 7** – So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith. The carpenter makes furniture or anything that is made of wood whereas the goldsmith handles all things made of gold. Both of them are business related. This means that they will tell one another that the economy of the nations is intact. Not only that, it also has a reference to the making of idols. Do not worry at all for we will somehow survive as we usually do. The one who smootheth with the hammer will encourage the one who smites the anvil. They smooth out the gold by hammering it into thin pieces to overlay the idols and cover them with gold and the one who smites the anvil is the one who makes the nails that will hold these gold pieces together onto the idols. This will keep the pieces in place and they will not move.

**Verse 8** – But Israel was different. Israel had always been the servant of the LORD. Israel belonged to the LORD and serves the LORD, not any idol. The LORD had chosen Jacob. Note the change in the use of the name from Israel to Jacob. Jacob

was the old name of Israel before Jacob's conversion. This means that the LORD had chosen Jacob from the beginning of Israel's existence, even before Jacob accepted the LORD as his God. Jacob was called the seed of Abraham. Abraham was called here as the friend of the LORD. The personal aspect of the relation between the Promised Land and Abraham is clearly stated here for emphasis. It was a covenantal relationship that makes a world of difference in the LORD's protection of Israel. Israel did not deserve the LORD's protection but the LORD protected her nonetheless.

**Verse 9** – This verse expressed the heart of the LORD in His relationship to Israel very well, *"Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."* It was always because of Abraham that Israel was treated so very well by the LORD. Abraham was the one whom the LORD called out of Ur of the Chaldees which is called here as "the ends of the earth." The LORD singles Abraham out from among the chief men. He said that Abraham was His servant and not the other way round. The LORD chose him and will not cast him away. This is a promise and a statement of fact!

#### **Fear Not Israel! — 41:10-20**

**Verse 10** – The LORD told Israel not to be afraid. The reason was not because the enemies were weak or that they had disappeared but that the LORD was with Israel. The

presence of the LORD means that Israel will never struggle alone. Israel was also told not to be dismayed i.e. nonplussed. The reason was that the LORD was the God of Israel. The emphasis on the LORD is one of a covenantal relationship. The emphasis on God i.e. "elohiym" is the LORD's power as God Almighty. Then the LORD emphasized that HE was the One who would help Israel by using the independent personal pronoun "I" in verse 10 to drive home the point.

Then the LORD God said that He will strengthen Israel. The word for "strengthen" has the idea of making the mind strong rather than physical strength. It could be understood as "steadfastly minded." To be strong in the mind means that Satan cannot plant doubt in the mind of the believer. The strength in the mind comes when the Word of God is learned, believed and obeyed. The LORD also said that He would help Israel i.e. He would surround Israel to ensure that whatever she might face He would be there to succour her.

The LORD added that He would uphold Israel with the right hand of His righteousness. The word "uphold" means "to sustain." The LORD will not allow Israel to fall for He will hold her up in righteousness. Israel will stand on righteousness for the LORD will make sure of that. This means that when Israel falls into sin and strays away, the LORD will bring Israel back to the path of righteousness.

**Verse 11** – The enemies of Israel will be dealt with by the LORD. These enemies are incensed i.e. to

grow warm with anger against Israel. The LORD will make them ashamed i.e. turn pale in the face and confounded i.e. put to confusion. They shall be as nothing i.e. a non-entity. Their attacks will be swept away by the LORD. In fact, the LORD can even turn their fierce wrath to His own praise and for the betterment of Israel's faith. The ones who strive with Israel will surely perish. They will be severely punished by the LORD. It is no small matter in the eyes of the LORD when the enemies attack Israel. To attack Israel is to attack God's work through Israel. Therefore it is equivalent to attacking God Himself.

**Verse 12** – Israel shall try to find her enemies but she will not be able to find them at all. The ones who contended with them will simply disappear from the face of the earth in God's time. They war against Israel but they will be as nothing before Israel. God will reduce them to nought i.e. disappear from the face of the earth. The enemies of Israel will be to Israel as nothing for the LORD will make them into nothing. They might have money power and people power but the LORD said that these are NOTHING before Him. They must be nothing to Israel too.

**Verse 13** – Now the LORD assures Israel that He will hold her right hand. Holding her right hand is like a mother holding onto the right hand of the child so that the child will never be lost and will always feel safe and secure. Holding on to the hand is a very wonderful gesture to every child. This means that the LORD

regards Israel as a little child whose hand he promised He will hold. He will also say to Israel not to fear for He will help Israel. This is the same as what is found in verse 10. The repetition is for emphasis.

**Verse 14** – This is the third time in five verses that the LORD assures Israel not to be afraid. It seems strange that the LORD calls Israel "Thou worm Jacob". What is a worm like? Gill captures the attribute of the worm well when he wrote, "Being like a worm, exposed to danger, and liable to be trampled upon and crushed, mean and despicable in their own eyes, and in the esteem of others." [Swordsearcher 6.2] To call Israel by her old name is significant. This is the name of disobedience. Israel might be in sin and deserved punishment from the LORD, but the LORD only wanted Israel to come back and not be like Jacob.

The LORD then switches back to calling her, the men of Israel in the next phrase. The LORD will help Israel for He is Israel's Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The word for Redeemer refers to someone who has paid a price to save. Since the LORD has redeemed Israel, would He now suddenly betray or ignore Israel in her time of need when she is most fearful? Of course not, for He is the Holy One of Israel. He can never lie or sin or do wrong for holiness characterise the LORD at all times.

**Verse 15** – The LORD will strengthen Israel. He will make for Israel a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. This was to

emphasize its sharpness. Threshing instruments do not possess teeth but a smooth sharp blade. This, however, is a very unusual instrument. It is used to thresh mountains and beat them small. It can also turn hills into chaff. The enemies can never be larger than mountains or hills no matter how powerful they were. They can never compete against mountains and hills that have the appearance of eternity. Generations may come and go but the mountains and hills surrounding Israel remain. However, Israel will be equipped with an instrument that could turn these enormous mountains and hills into nothing!

**Verse 16** – The power of Israel over her enemies is described using the illustration of one who fans something. Israel shall fan at her enemies and the wind that the fan produces shall carry them away. The whirlwind shall scatter them. They did not have mechanical fans. The fans they had were hand held fans. This means that with the flick of one's wrist, the enemies would be blown away like the whirlwind blowing away whatever that stands in its path. Israel shall rejoice in the LORD which means it is the hand of the LORD that Israel would see delivering her from all her enemies. Israel shall also glory in the Holy One of Israel for the LORD did what was according to His holiness.

**Verse 17** – When the people of God face the greatest extremities of life, the LORD will provide aid in time of need. The poor and the needy are used here to describe the most severe state of oppression. The word for

"poor" refers to one who is depressed in mind and circumstances. The word for "needy" refers to one who is like a beggar in severe destitution. Both these words are used to describe Israel in a time of great devastation. When they seek water and they find none and their tongue fails because of thirst, I the LORD will hear them. When the Bible says that the LORD hears it means that He will take the necessary action to help. The LORD adds that He is the God of Israel and will never forsake them (same emphasis as the Ten Commandments). He is the God of Israel and not any other nation's God. If anyone were to try and hurt Israel, He would not let that happen.

**Verse 18** – The LORD will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. He will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. Nature is not Mother Nature. Nature is the ground from which the LORD created for man's survival. When God's people suffer want like water, the LORD will provide copiously for His people. Wilderness and springs and dry land are all at God's disposal. Nature cannot control the power of the LORD. He does whatever He pleases. Even the desert can be turned easily into springs of water by the Word of the LORD!

**Verse 19** – The LORD will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree (or acacia), the myrtle and the oil tree (or pine cf. Neh. 8:15-translated as pine). The LORD said that He would set in the desert the fir tree and

the pine and the box tree together. These trees are not meant to be planted together because of their different characteristics. However when the land is full and planting has to be done in the desert it goes to show how rich and wealthy Israel is. They have money to plant in the desert! Matthew Poole made a good summary of these trees, "which are both useful and pleasant to the eye, and giving a good shadow to the traveller, which in those hot and parched countries was very comfortable". It is refreshment for the uncomfortable traveller in the hot and parched desert.

**Verse 20** – This was for the benefit of everyone involved – both Israel and the enemies of Israel. It was just like the ten plagues in the time of Moses when Israel was in slavery. The LORD provided all that they needed to believe; Moses and Israel unto salvation but to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, destruction. They may see, know, consider, and understand together. These are all intimate verbs to describe the response of the people who watched. They first see with their eyes. Then they understand with their mind. Then they contemplate on what they saw and finally, they reach an understanding together.

They will see the hand of the LORD in it. The LORD did it all. The Holy One of Israel created it. It was not Israel but the LORD Himself. These deeds will strengthen the faith of the believers and condemn the enemies of Christ!

**Idols Be Gone! — 41:21-29**

**Verse 21** – The LORD said to the worshipper of idols to produce their cause. They were to bring forth their strong reason. Both of these verbs are in the imperative. It is a command to the enemies of Israel. This is the King of Jacob speaking.

**Verse 22-23** – The challenge to the worshippers of idols was for them to show that their idols are truly God. Let the idols worshippers bring forth their idols and demonstrate their abilities. Let the idols tell the future. Can idols tell the future? Obviously they could not. But could they tell the past? Obviously they could not either. Idols were made by hands for they had a beginning. If they were made in the 8th century B.C. then could they tell what happened at the beginning of time or even anytime in the past before its creation? Could they tell the past and then predict the future? Could they tell what will happen to anything that is present and what it will become in the future?

All these things are beyond the idols but they are part and parcel of what a god is supposed to do. They can't be bound by time or space! They ought to know the past as well as the future! But are the idols able to do any of these things? The idols are challenged to prophesy any future event that will come to pass to demonstrate that they are really true gods. They are challenged to do something right now whether they be good or evil to let us see that they are indeed alive so that we may be dismayed i.e. proven wrong and be afraid of these idols! These idols are

challenged to move and do something in front of us so that we may see and consider them together.

**Verse 24** – No idol has ever done that before. The idols are nothing. Their works are nothing! The one who chooses an idol as his god is an abomination to the LORD. Idolatry is a very serious sin. Idols have eyes that cannot see. They have ears that cannot hear. They have hands and feet that cannot move. That is why they are nothing before the LORD. They ought to be nothing before every believer as well. Do you know what the fruits of idolatry are?

**Verse 25** – After revealing that idols are not real gods because they are not able to prophesy, the LORD demonstrates that He is the one living and true God by prophesying here. The LORD said that He has raised up one from the north. He has to be Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Jeremiah 1:13) who comes from the north. He shall come. Then the LORD shifts His focus and prophesies a period after Nebuchadnezzar and said that there will be another who comes from the east as the phrase "from the rising of the sun" indicates. This refers to the Medo-Persian period and none other than Cyrus is referred to here. He will call upon the Name of the LORD which is true as he would allow the Jews to return to the Land of Promise after the end of the 70 years of exile as prophesied by the LORD. He will be given great power to conquer as he shall trample on princes like trampling on mortar which is soft and pliable. He is also likened to the potter who treads

on clay. Clay is soft and could be shaped according to potter's desire.

These prophecies came to pass exactly according to the LORD's prophecies. This clearly demonstrates to the Israelites that the LORD God of Israel is indeed the one living and true God.

**Verse 26** – Using a series of rhetorical questions the LORD states clearly that He is eternal and has always been around both in the past and as well as in the future. **Isaiah 41:26** (KJV) "*Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.*" The LORD is the One who has declared the past – creation and the global flood. The LORD is also the one who had revealed Himself to Israel so that Israel might know that He is righteous. There is no one else but the LORD who had shown Himself to Israel. There were no idols that did what the LORD did. The LORD was the one who heard the words i.e. the prayers and cries of Israel, no one else!

**Verse 27** – The identity of "the first" here has to be the LORD Himself. He says to Zion i.e. Jerusalem "Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings." The "them" has to refer to the prophecies of the Babylonians and Persians that would soon come. The LORD will give to Jerusalem one that will bring good tidings. Commentators like Matthew Poole understood the



singular usage of the word "one" to refer to many. He says that the singular is used as a plural here. Therefore his conclusion is that the "one" refers to a series of prophets that will come. However, if one were to understand the singular usage as it stands then it refers to one particular person and not many. Some argue for Christ but I see it as too remote. My opinion is that this could probably refer to Jeremiah who ministered after Isaiah to comfort the nations before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians.

**Verse 28-29** – The concluding remarks of the LORD on the idols are that there was no one from among the idol worshippers who could answer Him. There was no counselor who could say one word to answer the demands of the LORD regarding idols prophesying or speaking or doing. They are all vanity! Their works are nothing because they did nothing! Their molten images are wind and confusion i.e. like the wind they come and they are gone. What they bring is confusion. Amen.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Isaiah 41:1-9

**TUESDAY:** Isaiah 41:1-20

**WEDNESDAY:** Isaiah 41:1-29

**THURSDAY:** Isaiah 41:1-29

**FRIDAY:** Isaiah 41:1-29

**Discussion Questions**

- 1. Should believers think that just as the LORD watched over the Israelites from their inception, He too will watch over every believer from the mother's womb? Does this include all physical, spiritual and emotional protection? If the answer is yes, why then do believers suffer defeat at the hands of the enemies of Christ?

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- 2. Are you a servant of the LORD? Will the LORD call you His servant? How do you feel being the servant of the LORD?

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- 3. Do you think that the enemies also believe that they are doing God's will just as you also do? Has this been the pattern throughout the ages? Is it possible to determine with certainty who is right and who is wrong?

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your service unto the LORD?  
Please explain.

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4. Do you see your enemies as nothing before your eyes? How do you feel toward them? What is the best way to feel toward them?

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7. If an idol really can speak and move would you then believe in idols that they are really gods? If the Charismatics can really go to hospital and heal the sick and critically ill, would you then embrace the Charismatic movement as true and that it is of God? Please give reasons.

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5. Are you a fearful person? Have you ever been afraid that the LORD would not help you or take care of you and your loved ones? Please cite an example from your own experience as an illustration.

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8. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?

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6. Do you think that you have the power from God to put down all your enemies who try to hinder