

—{1}. **Isaiah 41:11-20** . . . . . **God Shows His Hand**

A. Introduction

1. Has anyone here notices a change in their eyes or ears?
  - a. the eyes not being able to read the fine print? ... not being able to thread a needle?
  - b. the ears missing key words when someone's speaking? ... having to turn up the sound a little higher to hear the news?
  - c. well, it comes to most of us
  - d. I had a cataract operation about 5 years ago on one eye and it made a world of difference – but I notice I make a lot of mistakes reading now, so maybe its time for the other eye
  - e. my hearing is perfect – it's just that people seem to talk much more quietly now than they used to do!
  - f. medical science can do a lot now; but cannot remedy everything
  - g. doctors cannot solve the problem of those whose spiritual eyes are blind, or their spiritual ears are deaf – that was the problem with Israel in the face of Isaiah's ministry: at its very outset, God warned Isaiah,  
<sup>9</sup> "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.'<sup>10</sup> Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10)
  - h. people haven't changed – and what described Israel then describes many people today – refusing to hear or see the gospel truth
  - i. 'But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.' in the words of the writer of Hebrews, 6:9.
2. may you and I be able to say truly, with the hymn writer,  
When God speaks, the high mountains tremble  
When God speaks, the loud billows roll  
When God speaks, my heart falls to list'ning  
and there is response in my soul!—{2}.

- a. it is God who is speaking in our text today; and we must listen
- b. His message to Israel – as it is to us also – is that He is going to put forth His hand on behalf of His people, that His people may see, and recognize, and consider, and gain insight – that He is God, their God and that they should surrender their – our – lives to Him
- c. When God shows His hand, we need to pay attention

### 3. God's hand

- a. is a hand of power – exercised for His people, against His enemies
- b. is a hand of discipline – teaching, leading, chastising
- c. is a hand of protection – warding off the enemy of our soul
- d. is a hand of love – providing and nurturing His children
- e. in today's text God shows His hand and these qualities
  - (A) in His hand upholding His people
  - (B) in His hand giving victory to His people
  - (C) in His hand blessing His people

B. God's Upholding Hand – <sup>11</sup>Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonoured; Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish. <sup>12</sup>You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, Those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent. <sup>13</sup>For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.' 41:11-13

### 1. God describes the enemies of His people in four ways

- a. first, they are 'angered, incensed, or raging'
  - (A) a lot of the Hebrew words for anger are related to the idea of fire and this one is no exception: it means to be burning
  - (B) we have seen the way the enemies of Christ reacted to Him – they were burning with rage and being consumed in their souls by this fire, could only think of how they might destroy Him
  - (C) and Jesus said, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also." (John 15:20)

- b. second, they are “your men of **‘contention, strife, conflict’**”
  - (A) they are bent upon getting the upper hand over God’s people
  - (B) they set themselves up as adversaries, as in a law court
  - (C) for they serve a master whose name is Adversary – Satan
  - (D) and Peter warns us, **“Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** (1 Peter 5:8)
- c. third, they are “your men of **‘quarrel, struggle’**”
  - (A) have you ever known – if you have lived any length of time at all, I am sure you have – people who are naturally quarrelsome?
    - (1) you say black, they say white
    - (2) you say good, they say bad
    - (3) you say blessed Jesus; and they curse
  - (B) if you push, they pull
  - (C) the enemies of God are naturally contrary to God’s people
- d. fourth, they **‘wage war with you’**
  - (A) this goes beyond a skirmish or a shoving match
  - (B) an all out war has been declared and we are part of it

2. How can we then face such enemies?

- a. we cannot, but God can
- b. throughout this passage when we come to the pronoun ‘I’, **‘I am the LORD your God’** that is emphatic; God says, “I am doing it”
- c. I am upholding your right hand – your hand of power, so weak, except that I have it in my hand
- d. I will help you, you who are so helpless, without my help
- e. so, **‘do not fear’** – the ever-encouraging words of God to His people

3. and the result?

- a. the enemies of God are ashamed – fearful to even put forth their faces – Jesus in Luke 23:30, quoting Hosea 10:8, tells of their shame in the end times, **“Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘cover us.’”**

- b. they are as if they never existed, as nothing – picture if you will, losing a gem stone from a piece of jewellery on the beach: you sift through the sand and you can find no trace of it; that is the picture here – these great enemies of the people of God – the empires of the OT – the powerful anti-God institutions of today – get down and search through the dust of the earth and you'll find no trace of them
- c. for 'they ... will perish' – not merely pass away, but utter destruction

4. that is what God's upholding hand does; then there is

C. God's Hand of Victory – <sup>14</sup> 'Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,' declares the LORD, 'and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. <sup>15</sup> Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains and pulverize *them*, And will make the hills like chaff. <sup>16</sup> You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them; But you will rejoice in the LORD, You will glory in the Holy One of Israel. 41:14-16

1. God brings the victory; God involves His people in the victory

- a. the term 'worm' is not belittling or an insult
- b. the term is used of the suffering Messiah in the prophetic Psalm 22, verse 6, "But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people."
- c. it is a description of the humbled situation of God's people
  - (A) of the OT people of God as they were exiled from their land
  - (B) of the NT people of God as they are but 'aliens and strangers (1 Peter 2:11) in a foreign world
  - (C) God's people are trampled down upon the earth
- d. the second way they are addressed, 'you men of Israel'
  - (A) a word being used that may convey the sense of 'mere mortals'
  - (B) but also conveying the idea of fewness of number
- e. but despite this being our situation, we are not to fear
- f. because God, our Redeemer, will help us, because He is the Holy One of Israel – set apart on behalf of His people

2. then comes an extraordinary picture

- a. this worm, this minority of people
- b. is going to thresh the mountains and hills until they are but dust
- c. the mountains and hills are expressive of the high and lofty position now held by the enemies of God and His people
- d. as we share God's enemies, so we will share in His victory over them
- e. threshing, here as elsewhere in Scripture including Jesus' parables, expresses judgement
- f. the judgement of God's enemies reduces them to dust, chaff "["4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment..."](#) (Psalms 1:4-5)

3. I would be remiss if I were not to make the obvious spiritual application

- a. be they difficult, or their persecution fierce as in many countries
- b. nevertheless our enemies may take a different than human form
- c. we ourselves can be enemies as Paul describes – "[For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,"](#) (Philippians 3:18)
- d. or the enemies can be internal: "[Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.](#)" (1 Peter 2:11)
- e. and they certainly are spiritual: "[For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.](#)" (Ephesians 6:12)

4. to gain the victory over these is joy in the glory to God; and so comes

- D. God's Hand of Blessing – ["17 The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them. 18 I will open rivers on the bare heights And springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water And the dry land fountains of water. 19 I will put the cedar in the wilderness, The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree; I will place the juniper in the desert Together with the box tree and the cypress, 20 That they may see and recognize, And consider and gain insight as well, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it.](#)

1. If the threshing and winnowing of mountains is extraordinary
  - a. how much more so is this!
  - b. that the sprawling, shifting sands of the desert
  - c. should become a thirst-quenching lake of life-giving water
  - d. that the barren land be covered with a seven-fold, lush forest
  - e. the transformation that only the hand of God can bring, be it done in a physical, material way; or be it done in a spiritual way
  - f. only those who have lived in a dry area can fully appreciate the force of this picture
    - (A) of the satisfying of thirst in a dry and parched land
    - (B) of the shade of trees in a place of relentless sun beating down
  - g. within a few chapters in the book of John, Jesus uses this picture of thirst quenching water twice
    - (A) to the woman at the well, come to draw water a mid-day, Jesus said, <sup>13</sup> ... "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)
    - (B) and at the feast of tabernacles, "Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'" (John 7:37)
    - (C) and Revelation ends, as Genesis begins, with a picture of trees for the enjoyment of mankind dwelling among them
  - h. so we have the word of the God, who has finished this work in Christ and who has created new life through the cross of Jesus Christ
2. the greatest thirst a person can face is that of the soul thirsting for God
  - a. in this passage there is a prayer implied of those thirsting in this way
  - b. for God answers that prayer; He gives the soul-satisfying water
  - c. He promises concerning the relationship we need with Him, that it will last and never disappoint, for He will never forsake us

## E. Conclusion

1. where are you putting your confidence in your life?

- a. in your struggles against the enemies within and without?
- b. are you overcoming daily by the Spirit's power
- c. have you entrusted yourself into God's hands for God's glory
- d. surrender yourself into His hands today; that He may keep you

2. Pay attention when God speaks; when God shows His hand to you

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