

ISAIAH 41

“FEAR THOU NOT, FOR I AM WITH THEE!”

The opening of this chapter is marvelous indeed! Jehovah is represented as summoning the whole earth to determine once and forever who is the true God. Is it Himself, or is it the idols and oracles of every heathen nation under heaven? The test proposed is a very simple one. The idols of the nations were to predict events in the near future, or to show that they had some kind of clear understanding of the events of former days. Of course, this was impossible. But the servant of Jehovah was prepared to show forth sealed-up prophecies, which would be precisely verified in historical events. He uttered minute predictions about King Cyrus of Persia (particularly in verses 2 and 25), which would be fulfilled before many years had passed away.

Immediately, there is a great commotion! The ends of the earth tremble and draw near before God’s judgment-seat. On their way there, each bids the other to take courage. There is an industrious furbishing up of the dilapidated idols, and manufacturing of new ones (verses 5-7). The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and the man who pounds with the hammer encourages him who strikes the anvil. They examine their workmanship to see if it will stand, and they drive great nails to make the idols steadfast. The universal desire is to make a strong set of “gods” who will be able to meet the Divine challenge. History furnishes some interesting confirmations of this contrast between the foolish predictions of heathen oracles and the clear prophecies of Old Testament Scripture, which were so literally and minutely fulfilled. The supposed utterances of the heathen idols were so vague that no matter what the outcome of the event happened to be, they could claim to have predicted it. But how striking is the contrast with the precise predictions of the inspired pages of Scripture, which even gave the name of the as-yet-unborn conqueror Cyrus (chapter 44:28; 45:1) – as well as many other details that were distinctly fulfilled in the course of his lifetime!

But while this great cause was being decided, the people of God are addressed in words of tender comfort, which are as fresh and life-giving today as when they were first pronounced. They are poor and needy; they seek water, and there is none; they are surrounded by angry enemies who strive with them, but they are as powerless as a worm. It is among such persons that the Lord has always found His chosen ones – not among the wise and prudent, but among the babes; not among the high and mighty, but among the lowly and obscure; not kings, but shepherd-boys. He finds them in their low estate, when they have

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The idols of the world are shown to be foolish and worthless, when compared with the knowledge and power of the Lord Jehovah – verses 1-7, 21-29*
- ❖ *Words of encouragement and assurance are given to the Lord’s poor, needy, and thirsty people – verses 8-20*

been cast aside and disowned by the world; and He adopts them for His own glory! Take heart, therefore, if you find yourself among those who are characterized by poverty and weariness and sin. The prime blessedness of the Kingdom of heaven is for the poor in spirit, the persecuted, the tempted, the wandering sheep, and the starving child!

What are the assurances that the Lord makes to His people? No height, however bare; nor depth, however profound – neither of them can separate us from His love! Amidst the gloom that has settled down upon the landscape of our life, He whispers, “Fear thou not: for I am with thee!” (verse 10) We do not need to be dismayed (verse 11); for He is still our God – bound to us by covenant-relationship, able to throw reinforcements into the citadel of our heart, and coming to our aid with horses and chariots of fire. Heart and flesh may fail, but He will strengthen. Difficulties may seem insurmountable, but He will help.

The Lord makes Divine provision for His people’s needs. Life is not easy for any of us, if we regard the external conditions alone. But as soon as we learn the Divine secret, rivers flow over bare heights in magnificent cascades; fountains arise in the rocky, infertile valleys; and the desert becomes lush with the beautiful growth of a forest glade! (verses 17-18) To the ordinary eye, there may appear no difference from the sad or lonely circumstances of life. But the eye of faith beholds a paradise of beauty, murmuring brooks fill the air with melody, and leafy trees spread their shade!



What makes the difference? What does Faith see? Faith is conscious that God is with her, and that His presence is the complement of every need. Faith recognizes the reality of God’s eternal choice; He has entered into a covenant which cannot be dissolved, and His love and faithfulness are bound to finish the work which He has commenced. Some readers of these words may be wearily traversing the wilderness of daily life! They seek water, and there is none. But if they would only look up with the eyes of faith, they would behold wells of water and the fertility of the land of Beulah. Many pilgrims pass through that land and see nothing like what John Bunyan describes in the *Pilgrim’s Progress*. No sun shines for them; no birds sing; no delightful beauty charms the senses. These entrancing delights are all around them, but they are unseen and unknown; yet others find paradise in the unlikeliest of surroundings. The difference between these experiences arises from the presence or absence of the faith that takes “true measure of its eternal treasure.” Therefore, comfort your heart! Wait patiently! Let Faith have her way. Hope to the end for grace to be brought unto you. Ponder these things until – in your case also – what seems to be only a desert in other eyes shall become like the garden of the Lord in yours!

Lord Jesus, help us to always see things through the eye of faith. Help us to not miss the beauty, loveliness, and delights of the Beulah-land of assurance! Amen.