

SOME GLORIOUS PROMISES FOR THE NEW YEAR

"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; yes, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41:10.

Having just entered the year 1949, which is for us an untrodden, untried, and unknown path, with some having the tendency to be a bit fearful on that account, it is well for us to pause for a brief period and listen to the voice of One who is deeply interested in us and graciously tender and merciful with us. This tendency to be afraid is natural when we see danger, or when we think we see danger.

Fear is a very distracting, disturbing, and confounding passion. From the cradle to the grave it casts its baneful shadow. All along the pathway of human history man has been afraid. Since Adam's experience in the Garden of Eden, fear has betrayed man's spirit, broken down his defense, unfitted him for the work of life, and added terror to the dying bed. Fear disturbs and distresses many people of all classes--the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the old and the young. This great adversary moves through the world, pauses at the door of every heart and knocks imperiously for entrance. If admitted, fear insidiously, mercilessly, and relentlessly burrows its way to the very center of life and demands undisputed control.

Fear is certainly a problem to be reckoned with because many people are in its thralldom. Even many of God's people are afraid. They see trouble on every hand. They wonder what will happen to them tomorrow. Some are afraid of the past, others of the present, and still others of the future. Men are afraid of themselves, afraid of each other, afraid of losses, afraid of poverty, afraid of disease, afraid of sorrow, afraid of loneliness afraid of old age, afraid of death, and afraid of what comes after death. And they are afraid in spite of the fact that at least eighty-one times God has said, "Fear not."

In this day of uncertainty, when the hearts of many are failing them for fear of the things to come upon them, it is of great comfort to hear the voice of God saying to us, "Fear thou not." When the future seems dark and unpredictable, wonder and consternation fill our hearts, so it is vitally important that we learn how to deal with and master our fears. To this end the voice of God says, "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." Thus God obligates Himself to encourage, to strengthen, to comfort, and to bless His children.

While the words of our text were spoken primarily to Israel, all of God's children can enjoy the same blessed assurance. His encouraging message, "Fear thou not," is meant for all of His children, regardless of their circumstances. What a privilege to receive such words of encouragement and inspiration spoken by the One who has never yet been known to fail! These glorious promises should ease the mind and satisfy the heart of every believer who has learned to trust Him fully. In this wonderful verse there are two glorious promises:

I. The Promise of God's Presence.

"I am with thee." This promise derives its value from the One making the promise. If these were only the words of a mere man, they would not be so encouraging. Regardless

of how sincere, well-meaning, and faithful the man might be, it is quite possible that he would be powerless to give the help that we may need. But these are the words of an Infinite Being, the Mighty Jehovah, the powerful Defender of His own, and that makes a tremendous difference.

When the disciples had the Lord Jesus with them they were full of confidence and courage; but when He told them that He was soon to leave them, they were troubled. That in part accounts for the great message of the wonderful Saviour: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

When the great Napoleon was with his soldiers they were not afraid, but they exclaimed: "Long live the Emperor! Lead us and we go to victory at the death." In view of the fact that the Christian has a far greater Leader than Napoleon, the believer should dismiss his fears when he hears the Eternal God say, "I am with thee." The promise of His presence is a wonderful encouragement, for He does not make a promise which He will not fulfill.

Because God has promised to be with us, He has commanded us not to fear. His presence cheers and inspires us with fearlessness. He has promised to be with us in our temptations, and "with every temptation make a way of escape." Circumstances and surroundings may seem dark and discouraging, but we are always safe when He is near. None of life's perplexing problems will be too hard to solve when He is with us, but instead they will dissolve into nothingness. The promise of His presence applies to life's struggles, afflictions, and trials. Certainly no one was ever tried as was Job. He lost his children. He lost his property. He lost his health. He lost his position. Even his wife turned against him. Yet in all of his trials God was with him, and the latter end of his life was more prosperous than the first.

In the midst of great enterprises, unusual responsibilities, and strenuous labors, it is delightful indeed to know that God is with His people, imparting joy and peace which surpass all understanding. It is impossible to explain fully the exhilaration which the child of God has in the consciousness of His nearness. The realization that the powerful, wise, and loving God is with us gives us something which is sufficient for all emergencies.

"When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust, and still obey;
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.

Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord Himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear.

Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light!
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey."

"Be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Here is the most endearing relationship in the universe! It is a relationship which exhibits the infinitude of His love and the unspeakableness of His mercy. I entreat you as a believer to ever remember that He who makes the sun to shine and the stars to twinkle is yours. As Paul said, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. "I am thy God." On our part these words imply reverence, submission, and obedience. On God's part they imply guardianship and blessing. He takes special care of His own, and they are always safe because God is with them.

II. The Promise of God's Power.

1. "I will strengthen thee."

If we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we certainly have a right to claim this glorious promise. Whatever our circumstances may be, as believers we can rest implicitly upon the Word of God. We will never be in a position where God cannot strengthen us. He is sufficient for all circumstances and for all emergencies. His all-sufficiency is an excellent incentive to fearlessness. There need be no fear on the part of those who really trust in the Living God. He will be with His own in sustaining power. He knows just how to infuse strength into our sinking hearts and to invigorate our spirits.

When He says, "I will strengthen thee," He means that He will fortify the heart against suffering and trial. Near the end of an illness, when the strength is returning and the weakness is departing, there is genuine gladness and gratitude, as those can testify who have been afflicted. It is likewise a great joy to learn that God is able to change our weakness into strength. In the consciousness of our weakness we should remember His promise, "I will strengthen thee." When we are confronted with some gigantic task, or with some duty that seems to appall us, it is strengthening to know that there is not anything that is too difficult for God. No matter how seemingly impossible the task, nor how heavy the load, His resources will be sufficient. He is able to cope with any and every situation. We need the strength which He promises, and which He alone can give.

2. "I will help thee."

As if to reaffirm the statement, "I will strengthen thee," He goes a step further and says, "I will help thee," which means I will render thee personal assistance. This promise implies that as we go through this world we have burdens to carry, and some of them are too heavy for us. How sorely we need help when we are taxed beyond our ability -- physically, mentally, and spiritually. But, thank God, there is One who is near to help us. His tender eyes are constantly over us. He knows every step we take and watches every move we make.

Also, God is able to help us. He can give us all the help we need, just when and where we need it. Not only is He able to help us, but He is always willing to help us. He may not always help us just at the time or in the way we desire, because that way may not be best; but in His own time and way He is ever willing to help us.

3. "I will uphold thee."

God says, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The grasp of the hand is significant of present and close friendship.

The right hand is an emblem of power -- here, of omnipotent power. There is no left-hand work with God; no sinister work; it is all right-hand work with Him. His faithful and victorious right hand can be relied upon to support us. If we will only place our complete trust in Him, He will shelter us beneath His wings, protect us by His omnipotence, and provide for us by His immeasurable and unfailling love. He will never fail us, for His strength will be equal to every emergency, for He is "the same yesterday and today, and for ever." The sense of His presence is the source of a courage which no danger can dispel, no suffering exhaust, and no death destroy. I know of no encouragement to surpass that given in these glorious promises of God if we will only appropriate and supply them.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

In ev'ry condition, in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As your days may demand, shall your strength ever be.

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, I will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.

When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flames shall not hurt thee; - I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, tho' all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"