

TEXT: Isaiah 41:8-10

TITLE: NEW STRENGTH AND NEW COURAGE FOR A NEW YEAR

INTRODUCTION:

A new year always brings new challenges. But we can lean on the age-old promises of God for **NEW STRENGTH AND NEW COURAGE FOR A NEW YEAR**. It is time to focus on our Year Verse for 2015 – actually, based on where we are providentially in the Book of Isaiah, I have chosen 2 verses for our church – we already preached on 40:31 – **NEW STRENGTH**; today we will add 41:10 as we cover verses 8-10 of chapter 41 – **NEW COURAGE**.

At Solid Rock Community Church, we emphasize the solid foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there are a number of fundamental certainties built upon this solid foundation. We appreciate the importance of **certainties** in life – certainties that include much more than death and taxes. Often our immediate physical circumstances and the pressures of our trials seem **more real** than the spiritual truths about who we are in Jesus Christ.

Sometimes you feel that nothing is going your way; everything seems to be attacking you; this can be overwhelming; Fear and Anxiety mount until life seems paralyzing.

BIG IDEA:

5 FOUNDATIONAL CERTAINTIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - affect our mind – | enlightening certainties – | Should change how we think |
| - affect our emotions -- | encouraging certainties – | Should change how we feel |
| - affect our will -- | empowering certainties -- | Should change how we act |

We all need to memorize these verses; pray over them

But is it even right to **apply these verses to ourselves** in any sense? We know that Isaiah was prophesying about the nation of Israel – his message particularly directed to the southern kingdom of Judah – warning them of their coming Babylonian captivity because of their sin. Yet he looked forward to deliverance under Cyrus the king of Persia and even further down the road to the ministry of the coming Messiah.

What does this have to do with Christians today?

We like to emphasize the **distinctiveness** of God’s program for the nation Israel. He still will keep His covenant promises to the nation regarding their land and a physical kingdom on earth. But we must maintain as well the **continuity** of how God deals with His people down through the ages. We are all children of Abraham by faith. When it comes to the spiritual blessings of the kingdom, we fully participate right now. The truths of this passage, while they have immediate interpretation to Judah’s historical situation, have definite application to us as the people of God.

I. CHOSEN TO BE SECURE IN GOD’S LOVE – KEY TO FAMILY IDENTITY

3 IDENTIFICATIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Who doesn’t want the love and security of being treasured in the family of God?

A. Servant Relationship – Privileged with Great Expectations for Future Blessing

“But you, Israel, My servant,”

Contrast with the nations from the remote lands with their reliance on false idols (vv.1-7)

Stedman: The title *“My servant”* is an honorable one: it was given to great leaders like Moses (Num. 12:7), David (2 Sam. 3:18), the prophets (Jer. 7:25), and Messiah (Isa. 42:1).

Young: In her there must be inculcated the truth that although the promises had been hers, she was nevertheless but a servant, who must do not her own will but the will of her covenant and electing God. To learn this lesson she must pass through the humiliation of the exile, from which she would be delivered only by God’s grace and His appointed instrument Cyrus. She must also learn that from the bondage of sin, which was the root of her misfortunes, she could be delivered only by One who, in a far truer sense than she herself, was a Servant of the Lord, to whom no other could be compared.

Do you view yourself as a Servant of God?

- In attitude, a willing and cheerful servant – dedicated to the will of God
- In deed, faithful and diligent

No room for pride; at the end of the day we still look back on whatever we have done and testify that we are but a servant who has not merit in ourselves or even in our accomplishments

B. Covenantal Relationship – Completely Unworthy but shown Unimaginable Favor

“Jacob whom I have chosen,”

Grogan: The name *Israel* suggests what God is determined to make of his people (**Gen 32:28**), while the name *Jacob* indicates that God loves them and has chosen them despite their demerit.

Name change – from “heel-catcher” or “deceiver” to “he struggles with God”
“you have striven with God and prevailed”

You remember the reputation of Jacob – a deceiver – that is what his name means, a conniver --

You have been chosen by God for salvation. What does that mean to you? Doctrine of election should be precious to God’s people. We only chose Him because He first chose us.

Speaks to the Grace of God

Speaks to our value to God as His precious possession

Speaks to our security in the relationship – no one can take us out of the Father’s hand

Maybe someone might want to argue that they are not a believer because they feel that God has not chosen them. They try to use this as an excuse not to obey the universal command to respond to the gospel invitation with repentance and faith. Friends, you can never blame God. He says the door is open. He puts the invitation out there. This doctrine of Election isn’t for unbelievers to wrestle with. It is intended as an encouragement for believers. If you are not yet in the family of God you cannot use this as an excuse. Are you more wicked and impossible to save than the people of Nineveh? They could have used that same argument – we are not the chosen people of God like Jonah. Yet they repented at the preaching of Jonah. You have the opportunity to repent as well.

C. Friendship Relationship

“descendant of Abraham My friend,”

Even in the Middle East today, Abraham still known by this expression *“friend of God”*

Vine: Three times Abraham is called the *friend of God*: in **2 Chron. 20:7** (*“Abraham, your friend forever”*), in the prayer of Jehoshaphat; here, in the Divine confirmation of this; and in **Jas. 2:23**, which combines God’s dealings with Abraham with this passage in Isaiah. The word rendered “friend” denotes one who is loving and beloved, an object of desire, and one who enjoys the utmost intimacy.

John 15:12-17

K&D: Every word here breathes the deepest affection. . . Inasmuch then as, on looking back to its past history, it could not fail to perceive that it was so thoroughly a creation of divine power and grace, it ought not to be fearful, and look about with timidity and anxiety; for He who had presented Himself at the very beginning as its God, was still always near.

Are you secure in God’s Love? Confident of your identity in the family of God?

- Live each day as a servant of God
- Rest in the security of having been chosen by God before the foundation of the world
- Develop your intimate relationship of friendship with the Living God – what a privilege

“What a Friend We Have In Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

II. CALLED TO FOLLOW GOD’S GUIDING HAND = KEY TO DISCIPLESHIP

Who doesn’t want to Follow the Lord Jesus Christ along the pathway to maturity and fruitfulness?

*“You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,”
“And called from its remotest parts”*

Look at the different levels of reference in God’s dealings with His people – one foreshadows the other until you get to ultimate fulfillment

- **calling of Abraham from Ur** – great distance – must walk by faith into the unknown
- **regathering of Israel after the Babylonian Captivity**
- **ultimate regathering of Israel in the end times**

For Abraham to follow God’s calling, he had to leave something behind = his former life; everything that was comfortable and familiar; set out on a journey of faith and submission; maybe you reject the calling of God because you are scared of the unknown – What is Jesus going to ask of me? Just remember that Satan wants you as a disciple as well. If you continue on that road, nothing awaits but eternal separation from God in hell. The pathway of discipleship is part of our humbling ourselves to admit that God knows better what is best for us.

Vine: God’s calling is always **effectual**. We may remind ourselves of this in our own experience in connection with the sphere of service allotted to us. If it has not been a matter simply of our

choice and decision, it is ours by reason of His plan and appointment and the directing power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephes. 2:11-13 *“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands -- remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you **who formerly were far off** have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*

Surprising and dramatic elevation of our status from remote nobodies to disciples being personally led by the Master Himself

We have been **called to Follow the Lord Jesus Christ** ... what does that mean? 4 Things:

- It means that we should have the same **character and value system** – putting an emphasis on internal righteousness and love for others as we see in the Sermon on the Mount; Paul exhorts believers to *“Imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ”*

- It means that we should strive for the same type of **commitment and priority** on doing the will of God – the pathway of discipleship – *“Follow Me”* – *“Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”*

- It means that we should have the same **compassion for evangelism** and seeking after the salvation of the lost – *“Follow Me and I will make you Fishers of men”* – *“I came to seek and to save those who are lost”*

- It means that we must be willing to **join in the sufferings of Christ**, to deny ourselves and to daily take up our cross and follow Jesus

So our calling is not to some free ticket to get out of Hell; our calling is to a life of holiness; our calling is a heavenly calling to *“keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God”* (**Col. 3:1**); Described as a *high calling* (**Phil. 3:14**)

But we don't determine our own course through life; we have the providential **guiding** of the Holy Spirit who indwells us; Are we confident in His guiding or do we think that as we have trusted Him with our lives, He has somehow messed things up and put us into a situation where He has left us on our own? Abraham thought that at times when trials like famine came to him and He turned His back on His calling and fled to Egypt for help; **Never lose confidence in your calling**; Jesus still wants to direct your life today; Follow Him; turn to Him for help and deliverance

Eternal Security – **Rom. 11:29** *“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”*

Perseverance is needed – **2 Pet. 1:10** *“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;”*

III. COMMISSIONED TO SERVE GOD = KEY TO PURPOSE IN LIFE

Who doesn't want to live with a passion and a purpose?

Nothing wrong with living a “Purpose driven life” – as long as it is oriented towards glorifying God and being His faithful servant

Here, Isaiah puts the focus on **the same three areas** that he spoke of in Point #1 back at the

beginning of vs. 8

A. Servant Relationship

“And said to you, You are My servant,”

B. Covenantal Relationship

“I have chosen you”

C. Friendship Relationship – Additional emphasis here – point that we will try to drive home
“and not rejected you.”

How do you know that someone is truly your friend? When they never reject you; never turn their back on you

Fitch: Israel must not think that the exile implies any absolute rejection of the chosen race. This is discipline and not abandonment by their God.

This expression lies at the heart of why I am a dispensationalist and not an amill, covenant theologian. There must still be the literal fulfillment of God’s promises to the nation of Israel. Despite all of their sin, He promises that He has not utterly rejected them. He will keep His unconditional promises. **Romans 11**

What does that mean for us today in the Church Age? Christ has promised never to reject His own; never to leave us or forsake. He reiterates that in His Great Commission charge – we know what we have been commissioned to pursue; we must be driven by the purpose of being instruments of our Lord Jesus Christ in the building of His church. If that means that now He wants to send us to the remotest parts of the world ... so be it. If He wants to keep us in this area, so be it. All of our decisions in life must revolve around this sense of our divine commissioning.

What is your purpose for living today? If you are tempted to lose heart and feel that God is not paying attention to your troubles, turn to this verse. He has not rejected you. Even when you sin, He calls you back to Himself.

IV. COMFORTED BY THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD TO COMBAT FEAR WITH FAITH AND COURAGE = KEY TO EXPERIENCING GOD’S PEACE

Who doesn’t want to be free from their fears and anxieties?

Who doesn’t want the Good Shepherd to cause us to lie down in green pastures; to lead us beside the quiet waters, to restore my soul, to guide me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake, to comfort me with His rod and staff, to prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, to anoint my head with oil, to cause my cup to overflow, to surround me with His goodness and lovingkindness all the day of my life and to cause me to dwell in the house of the Lord forever! (Ps. 23)

Christ says He came so that we might experience His peace – that type of peace where when the storms rage about us, we can sleep peacefully even as He demonstrated on the boat in the Sea of Galilee

A. Antidote for Fear = Presence of God – in the context of a personal relationship

“Do not fear, for I am with you” – Believe this

Stedman: 41:1 – 44:28 In this section of the book the Lord seven times says, *“Fear not!”* to His people (41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8). As the Jewish remnant faced the challenge of the long journey home and the difficult task of rebuilding, they could think of many causes for fear. But there was one big reason not to be afraid: The Lord was with them and would give them success. . . In contrast to the fear experienced by the Gentile nations is the confidence shown by Israel, God’s chosen servant (41:8-13), because God was working on their behalf. **In spite of their past rebellion, Israel was not cast away by the Lord.**

Charles Stanley: **Nature of Fear** -- Why is fear so damaging? Because it is as though we constantly have a message playing in our mind, telling us to be afraid. We are programmed early in life by others to be anxious concerning relationships or certain situations, and that fear continually torments and punishes us—paralyzing us from doing God’s will. Our worries dominate all our goals and desires, blocking our spiritual growth and preventing us from building our faith. This does not honor God in the least; in fact, our anxiety is a way of saying we do not think God is powerful enough to protect us. We become increasingly doubtful of the Lord’s powerful promises. Since we don’t trust God, we begin to assess and respond to His circumstances in our own strength and reasoning power. The result is that we come up empty in life. Fear simply does not fit the life of a child of God. We may have moments of fear, but we should handle them quickly, remembering God’s promise that He will use all things for our benefit and His glory.

B. Antidote for Anxiety = Power of God – in the context of a personal relationship

“Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.” – Take courage ... God is on your side

Look in dismay; gaze about in anxiety

Young: The verb has reference to those who are fearful and hence look about in all directions to see whether there is anything that can harm them. This is not for Israel, for God is with her.

If He is not your God ... you should fear ... you should anxiously look about you ... you are on dangerous ground; the guillotine of God’s wrath could fall at any moment; you have resource for deliverance from the power of sin; no enablement for victorious living

There is no power over sin apart from Christ; There can be external window dressing ... but nothing that fools God

Don’t forget God’s charge to Joshua as he took over the mantle of leadership from Moses:
Joshua 1:1-9 still true for us today

V. CONFIRMED BY THE ENABLING GRACE OF GOD = KEY TO VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING

Who doesn’t want to live the victorious Christian life?

A. Strength / Power in your weakness – Weakness is no excuse for Fear or Anxiety

“I will strengthen you,”

Vine: fortifying in weakness, difficulty and opposition

Is. 40:31 “*Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.*”

Psalm 80:17 “*Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.*”

B. Sufficiency / Enablement to accomplish the will of God – **Inability is not excuse for Fear or Anxiety**

“*surely I will help you,*”

Vine: assistance – giving guidance, direction and protection

Isaiah 41:13-14 “*For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you. 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.*”

C. Sustenance / Support to persevere – **Weariness is no excuse for Fear or Anxiety**

“*Surely I will **uphold you** with My righteous right hand.*”

Psalm 41:12 “*As for me, You **uphold me** in my integrity, And You set me in Your presence forever.*”

Grogan: The threefold affirmation of strength comes to its consummation in a reference to the *righteous right hand* of God, a reminder possibly of the tender strength of the Shepherd-King in **40:9-11**.

Vine: right hand is associated with the idea of power and success, and suggests prosperity.

Young: To Israel this righteousness will be a blessing; but to the nations who know Him not, the righteousness will appear in the punitive and retributive justice meted out for their wickedness.

CONCLUSION:

Never be moved or shaken

5 BEDROCK CERTAINTIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- Chosen
- Called
- Commissioned
- Comforted
- Confirmed

“How Firm a Foundation”

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.*

*I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you deal with feelings of insecurity?
- 2) Does your life reflect a servant mentality where you are seeking first God's kingdom objectives?
- 3) What have you given up to Follow Jesus in the pathway of discipleship?
- 4) What types of things make you fear and anxiously look around as if God has left you on your own to face some impossible challenge?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Charles Stanley: The Landmine of Fear

Have you ever considered how your emotions affect your life?

Love, for example, influences your feelings, behavior, and even your looks. The same is true of fear. It can affect your thoughts, conduct, and even your physical health. Apprehensions have the power to hold you back from all that God wants to accomplish in your life.

Satan uses the emotion of fear to prevent you from enjoying what the Lord has planned for you. You may think that you don't have any fears, but the truth is that nearly everyone is afraid of something. Your fears may be hidden, and that makes them even more dangerous.

Almighty God is greater than any terror your mind can imagine, and He wants you to walk in courage and faith. In **Isaiah 41:10**, He says, *"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

Key Passage: Isaiah 41:8-14

Supporting Scripture: Joshua 1:6-9; Proverbs 17:22; Isaiah 64:4; John 14:18; Acts 18:9; Ephesians 1:3-4; Philippians 4:19; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 13:5

Scriptural Principles:

1. Six basic fears.

There are six basic things that all of us are anxious about at one point or another. They are the fears of poverty, death, sickness, old age, criticism, and the loss of a loved one. The human reaction of fear is not a sin; in fact, there are some fears which are useful or even wise. Protective fear, for example, usually helps keep us safe. There is also the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. This means that we are to reserve reverence, honor, and exaltation for the holy God we worship. The negative type of fear, which becomes a landmine, is the kind of anxiety that damages and enslaves us. God told Joshua, *"Be strong and courageous! Do not*

tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Fear is a normal part of life, but not one that should hold us constantly in its grip. Our heavenly Father gives us promises to hold on to so that we never have to be dominated by fear.

2. The nature of fear.

3. The sources of fear.

Where does this terrible landmine come from? Fear can be the product of sin because anxiety and guilt are a natural result of our transgressions. Fear can also result from things we have been taught or from our own imaginations. Doubt of God, poor self-image, and ignorance of God’s Word are other sources of our worries. We must have our hearts fortified by God’s promises so that we won’t be so susceptible to the enemy’s weapon. The more we dwell on God’s Word, the more courageous we will be.

4. The consequences of fear.

There are terrible results for those who give in to the tyranny of fear. The anxious person is afraid to take risks and, as a result, will be incapable of launching out on the great adventures God has prepared for him. He will be indecisive and procrastinate on important projects, because he will be fearful of making the wrong decision. By not acting in a timely manner, he will thwart his own efforts. In time, his self-confidence will be undermined and he’ll give in to an irrational course of action because of the torment he’s feeling within. Ultimately, fear will dominate his entire life. He’ll long to be free from his anxieties, but to be free he will have to give in to what he’s most terrified of—lack of control. He’ll only experience true freedom when he gives control of his life to God.

5. The way to be healed of enslaving fear.

Do you really want to be free of fear? The answer should come easily, since no one wants to suffer; however, being free from fear requires you to step out in faith. You must recognize and admit that the basic cause of your fear is your failure to trust in the sovereignty of God. You must also make a choice to be courageous—to take your eyes off the cause of your apprehension, and gaze upon God instead. He will liberate you from those powerful emotions if you will resolve to trust and obey Him. **Isaiah 64:4** instructs, “*From days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.*” Only God can free you from this devastating landmine. Seek Him through His Word and in prayer, and trust Him to set you free. Reprogram your mind with His truth, and trust Him to fill your every need.

6. Why there is no need to fear.

The Lord is with you. He is not out of reach in some distant place, but is there beside you at every moment. He is your God, and He loves you more than anyone else ever could. He promises, “*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand*” (**Isaiah 41:10**). God will strengthen you and help you, no matter what happens. These are solid promises from His Word, and He’s never broken a single pledge He’s ever made. You can expect Him to fill your every need, no matter what obstacle or challenge you face in life. This is your wonderful heritage as a child of God—so embrace Him and the wonderful victory that’s yours through Him.

Jim Bomkamp: Though the people had failed the Lord miserably and it was because of their

great sin that they were now in Babylonian captivity, God reminds this future generation there in captivity that He has indeed chosen and called them to be His servants, and that He has not rejected them.

Alan Carr: Precious Promises for Your Journey

I. THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

- A. His Presence Is Powerful – His presence has the power to drive away fear – 2 Tim. 1:7.
- B. His Presence Is Personal – Matt. 28:20. (Ill. Not an angel, but the Lord Himself – John 6:20 – the "I AM.") Ill. New Chinese believer named Lo who found Matt. 28:20 and took it personally.
- C. His Presence Is Perpetual – Heb. 13:5 – Ill. Where life can lead, still never alone!

II. THE PROMISE OF HIS PERSON

- A. There Is A Relationship – (Thy) This is personal. (Ill. I need to know what He can do for me.)
- B. There Is A Realization – He is GOD! He can do anything! (Ill. Eph. 3:20; Job 42:2; Luke 1:37; Psa. 115:3**)
- C. There Is A Reality – (Ill. "Dismayed" – To look anxiously about.) If God is my God, and He is an able God, then why do need to fear, fret or faint? My God is on the throne! (Ill. His mighty deeds. He hasn't changed! – Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) (Ill. We need to remember just who He is!)

III. THE PROMISE OF HIS POWER

(God's promise here is three-fold. Ill. Yea = "Surely" There are three aspects of His power that we can count on.)

- A. He Will Strengthen Us – He will give us the power to see every duty and every day to its conclusion. There will be grace and strength for every need – 2 Cor. 12:9; Isa. 40:13.
- B. He Will Support Us – He will give us what we need, when we need it, in the exact proportions that we require it – Phil. 4:19. (Ill. Psalm 23:1-6 – The statement of verse 1 is explained.)
- C. He Will Sustain Us – God will keep us and get us safely through the journey until we all reach Heaven, Ill. Vrs. 9, 17. God did not save us to abandon us along the way – 1 Pet. 1:5, (Ill. Present, Passive, Participle) (Ill. The Egyptian in 1 Sam. 30:11-13 – God doesn't operate like that! Ill. Phil. 1:6; 1 Thes. 5:23) Ill. That's my kind of guarantee!

Constable: The Lord turned from addressing the nations to speaking to Israel. God had chosen the Israelites for special blessing because He chose to love them more than other peoples. Election rests on love (cf. Deut. 7:7-8). The reference to Jacob recalls the unworthiness of the Israelites, and the mention of Abraham the fact that Abraham loved God (Gen. 18:17-19), the proper response to electing love (cf. 1 John 4:19). Both references also connect to God's covenant with the patriarchs. God had called Israel to be His servant.

God reminded His people that He had called them from the remotest part of the earth to be His servant. He did this in Abraham's case when He called him out of Ur into the Promised Land, and He did it in Jacob's case when He brought him back into the land from his sojourn near Haran. God had determined not to reject His people. Israel had nothing to fear (cf. John 15:14-15).

Moreover, the Israelites did not need to fear because God was with them, and He had committed Himself to them (cf. Matt. 28:20). They need not look one way and then another trying to find safety (cf. vv. 5-6). Furthermore their God promised to help them in every way with His powerful right hand, a symbol of strength, and to do what was right (cf. 40:10-11).

Guzik: Jehoshaphat knew that Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). James knew that Abraham was the friend of God (James 2:23). We are also the friends of God, not because of

our relation to Abraham, but because of our relation to the Son of God, Jesus. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.* (John 15:14-15).

Greg Allen: What do you trust in at a time of trial? Where do you turn in a time of helplessness? Think of that trial that you're going through right now, and be honest with yourself: what is it that you trust in to get you through it? Is it the God of Israel? Or is it, perhaps, some man-made resource that is likely to topple just when you need it the most? Have you ever considered that the trial you're in is intended by God to help you see what it is you really trust in? What does this trial tell you about your ultimate trust?

The first word of our passage this morning - the word "But" - is intended to emphasize a contrast between the weak, unreliable trust of this world, and the confidence we can have in one true God of Israel. He is the almighty, sovereign God who calls conquering kings forth by name, long before they are even born. God Himself speaks to His frightened, distressed people . . .

These words were spoken some twenty-seven centuries ago to the people of Israel. It's a wonderful word of encouragement and promise. But what right - if any - do we Christians, living in our day and age, have a claim this word of encouragement as our own and apply it to ourselves? Is it legitimate for us to do so?

I want to encourage you that it is absolutely right for you and me, as believers in Jesus Christ, to claim this as God's word of encouragement to us in a time of trial. The Bible tells us that there indeed was a time when we were "strangers and foreigners" to the promises of God; being "Gentiles in the flesh";

... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone ... (Eph. 2:11-20).

We believing Gentiles, "being a wild olive tree", have been "grafted in" among the natural branches of God's covenant people; "and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree ..." (Romans 11:17). In Christ, we enjoy today full claim to the "exceedingly great and precious promises" of the God of Israel (2 Peter 1:4).

Granted, it would be unwise to indiscriminately interpret everything in the Old Testament as if it applied to us today. We have to use sanctified common sense in how we interpret and apply the Bible to our lives. But dear brother or sister in Christ; don't be afraid to lay full claim to this

word of promise as God's own word of encouragement to you. In Christ, you have been brought under the promises of God to His covenant people. Whatever problem you may be facing today, whatever difficult situation you're in, whatever trouble or trial overwhelms you, the almighty God of Israel says to you as He said to her; "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." . . .

God identified Israel as precious to Himself because He "chose" her for Himself. His choice of Israel was an unmerited one; it was not based on anything worthy in Israel, but only on the basis of His divine grace. Moses once told the people of Israel, "*The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt* (Deut. 7:7-8)."

<http://www.bethanybible.org/archive/2002/092902.htm>

Irfon Hughes: The Servant of God -- Great Privilege to being a Servant of God

Theme of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah. 4 servant songs -- fulfilled in person of Christ; other times as here the servant is nation of Israel. Sometimes Isaiah, sometimes King Cyrus referred to as servant of God. Everyone who professes the name of Christ is a servant of God.

1. Chosen by God – belong to God intimately and personally; can't think that it doesn't matter how we live; doctrine of Election; can't say you have been chosen to be something else; all believers chosen on the same level; He's our Master; a doctrine of greatest security and greatest humiliation of duty; chosen to do a task; should fill us with awe, not pride

2. Totally Unworthy and Undeserving to be Servants of God -- we are the most unlikely of servants

3. Given Status of Servants by God – He guarantees our safety and our security; all by God's Grace; should not be any arrogance about us; no self-centered attitudes; Cannot ever be separated from God; remember We are invincible, invulnerable; we may die or suffer but we will not cease being His servants; Must have attitude of a cheerful servant; person who is good servant is best qualification for leadership

<http://www.hillcrestpresbyterian.org/audio/20070128-hughes-mw.mp3>

Alistair Begg: Facing the Future With God (:1-10)

This world has climate of Tension; moral disintegration; increasing fragmentation of family life; enter new year with sense of great foreboding; what does the Scripture say about facing the future with God? An old promise for a new year (vs. 10)