

CHOSEN, CALLED, AND KEPT
Isaiah 41

Intro: Isa. 41 is not to be separated from ch. 40. Both deal with the majesty, the greatness, the glory of God, but in a different way as well as in a similar way:

- 1) The different way: In ch. 40 we see the greatness of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe--the heavens and the earth; in ch. 41 we see the greatness of God as the Author and Guide of history. So, Delitzsch, Isaiah, Vol. II, p. 157. In ch. 41 God is especially the God of Providence.
- 2) The similar way: In both chapters we see God's superiority over men and nations, as well as His superiority over the gods of the nations. Idolatry was God's great concern, you will remember, when He led the children of Israel into their promised land. God knew that His people would become idolatrous, and told Moses so before Moses died. But here the challenge and rebuke is to the nations.

There are three parts to chapter 41:

- 1) In the first part, vv. 1-7, the Lord asked "the islands" (v. 1) who had raised up "the righteous man" (v. 2), probably a reference to Cyrus, and who had given him the power to do what he had done. The answer is in v. 4. The first part of v. 4 shows that God is the One Who framed history "from the beginning. But, in spite of this, v. 7 indicates that the people of the Gentile world give the credit to their gods which even then they were fashioning.
"The islands" "was the expression commonly employed in the Old Testament to designate the continent of Europe, the solid ground of which is so deeply cut, and so broken up, by seas and lakes, that it looks as if it were about to resolve itself into nothing but islands and peninsulas" (Delitzsch, Vol. II, p. 157).
- 2) The second part, vv. 8-20, has to do with Israel. In v. 5 the Lord said how the Gentiles had feared and were afraid because of the power of Cyrus. But with the beginning of verse 8, the Lord comforted (cf. 40:1, 2) Israel, showing the reasons why she did not need to be afraid. She was unique among the nations of the earth. We will come back to that.
- 3) In the third part, vv. 21-29, the Lord presents a direct challenge to the idols themselves, showing that they were nothing, and that those who trusted in them were nothing.

Thus, the chapter teaches us of the providence of God, the sovereignty of God in salvation, and the superiority of God over all other gods. The first has to do with history; the second, with salvation; the third, with religion.

Thus, wherever we turn we are confronted with the greatness and the uniqueness of the God of Israel.

But now let us direct our attention to the central part of the chapter: vv. 8-20, the part that has to do with the people of God.

Most of the Lord's people are familiar with v. 10. Perhaps you have committed it to memory. It would be surprising if at some time you have not come to this verse seeking peace and comfort for your own heart in some time of need. While it was originally given to Israel, it surely is a promise for all of the people of God at any time in history. What the Lord was to His people then, He is to us now.

But a verse always means more when we see it in its context. The context is vv. 8-20. Let us examine them as having to do with our salvation.

I. WHY ISRAEL WAS DIFFERENT (Isa. 41:8, 9).

These two verses have given me my subject: The people of God in Israel were CHOSEN, CALLED, AND KEPT.

- A. Chosen: when God could have had any people that He wanted to have, He had chosen them.
- B. Called: They never would have come to Him if He had not "taken them from the ends of the earth, and called" them "from the chief men thereof."
- C. Kept: because He had "not cast" them "away." See v. 9, then end.

How many times the Lord would have been justified in casting them away, but He kept them.

In v. 8, note:

- 1) Israel and Jacob.
- 2) My servant, repeated in v. 9.
- 3) The seed of Abraham my friend.

Now because these things were true, therefore the Lord could say the following to them. Verse 10 does not belong to everyone; only to the Lord's people--those who are chosen, called, and kept!

II. GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE (Isa. 41:10-19).

- A. His promises to help them (vv. 10-14).

"I will help thee" is stated in vv. 10, 13, 14.

And so three times the Lord said, "Fear not." (See the same verses.)

Note the various ways He would help them:

- 1) By assuring them of His presence, and that He was on their side: "I am with thee."
- 2) By re-confirming the fact that he was their God.
- 3) By holding their right hands (v. 13) with His right hand (v. 10).
- 4) By defeating their enemies (vv. 11, 12).

And all of these helps were to be learned from the Word. Note the expression, "saying unto thee," in v. 13. If we want help, we go to the Word.

And all of this was in spite of the fact that He addressed them as, "thou worm Jacob." Cf. Psa. 22:6. Worm theology is good theology because that is what we are: worms! This speaks of humility, and is a recognition both of our unworthiness and our need.

- B. His promises to make them, and to use them (vv. 15, 16).

Instead of being defeated, they will be the victors! But the difference is to be seen in what God will do to them, and then how He will use them.

Here is Isaiah's version of Phil. 1:6. Also of 2 Cor. 2:14,

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

- C. His promises to provide for them (vv. 17-19).

1. He will hear them (v. 17).
2. He will provide for them when conditions are absolutely hopeless (vv. 18, 19).

The figures of speech certainly have future significance, but they are symbols also for the abundant way in which the Lord meets the needs of His people. He gives water where there usually is no water. He causes trees to grow where there usually is only a desert plant here and there. This is not "a scanty vegetation that springs up, but a corresponding manifold fulness of stately, fragrant, and shady trees; so that the steppe, where neither foot nor eye could find a resting-place, is changed, as by a stroke of magic, into a large, dense, well-watered forest, and shines with sevenfold glory,--an image of the many-sided manifestations of divine grace which are experienced by those who are comforted now" (Delitzsch, Vol. II, p. 167).

Relate "make" to "my servant."

Note the I will's of the Lord God. Such things would be impossible without Him!

All of this leads to my final point:

III. GOD'S PURPOSE (v. 20).

We mean, God's purpose for doing what He does in the way that He does it.

To whom was the Lord referring when He said in verse 20, "That they . . ."

The context seems to indicate that it refers to the nations of the earth, the heathen who fall down and worship the false gods. The Lord wanted them to realize that such miraculous things did not just happen. Nor were they like anything that their own gods had ever done. They certainly went beyond what the people of Israel could have done for themselves. IT HAD TO BE THE WORK OF "THE LORD . . . THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL." He had done it; He had created all of these things.

Did not the Lord say the same thing in Matt. 5:16?
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Concl: Thus, here we have more of the comfort of God.

We can be comforted when we remember:

- 1) Who we are, by His grace.
- 2) What He has promised to be to us and to do for us.
- 3) That He has great reasons for doing with us as He sees fit to do.

May the Spirit of God enable us to make the application to our own lives in the circumstances which we face tonight.