

THE ARM OF THE LORD
Isaiah 51:9-16

Intro: There are two parts to this section:

- 1) Isaiah's prayer in vv. 9-11,
- 2) Jehovah's answer in vv. 12-16.

Isaiah was obviously praying for the people of Judah because the answer has to do with the nation, but there probably is also a sense in which he was troubled as the nation was.

It shows two things about Isaiah (in addition to the fact that he may have been troubled):

- 1) That he was a man of prayer.
- 2) That there were times when he did not have the answer, and so had to turn to the Lord.

The problem with the people of Judah was fear. Their prayer was prompted by fear, and the answer was to calm their fears. Even Isaiah's prayer shows how he was reaching out for comfort and peace.

When we compare the prayer with the answer, there are two similarities:

- 1) In both sections there is encouragement from the past and from the future to trust the Lord in the present.
- 2) In both sections there are questions. In the first, Isaiah was questioning the Lord; in the second, the Lord was questioning Isaiah and the people of Judah. Both questions need to be answered.

Spurgeon preached a sermon on one occasion on vv. 12 and 13, and he called it, NEEDLESS FEARS. (See Vol. 54, pp. 301 ff.) In his introduction he said this:

Objects often influence us out of proportion to their value because of their nearness. For instance, the moon is a very small insignificant body compared with the sun, yet it has far more influence over the tides and many other matters in the world than the sun has, simply because it is so much nearer to the earth than the sun is. The life that is to come is infinitely more important than the life that now is, and I hope that, in our inmost hearts, we reckon that the things that are seen and temporal are mere tribles compared with the things which are not seen and eternal; yet it often happens that the less important matters have a greater influence over us than those which are far more important, simply because the things of earth are so much nearer to us. Heaven is infinitely more to be desired than any joy of earth, yet it seems far off, and hence these fleeting joys may give us greater present comfort. The wrath of God is far more to be dreaded than the anger of man, yet sometimes a frown or a rebuke from a fellow-creature will have more effect upon our

minds than the thought of the anger of God. This is because the one appears to be remote, while, being in this body, we are so near to the other. Now, beloved, it will sometimes happen that a matter, which is scarcely worthy of the thought of an immortal spirit, will fret and worry us from day to day. There is some oppressor, as the text puts it, whom we dread and fear continually, yet we forget the almighty God, who is on our side, who is stronger than all the oppressors who have ever lived, and who has all people and all things under his control. The reason why we act thus is because we think of God as if he were far off, while we can see the oppressor with our eyes, and we can hear with our ears his threatening words. I want, at this time, to be the means in the hands of God of turning the thoughts of his people away from the distress of the present to the joy and comfort which, though more remote, ought still to be more powerful over the mind and heart because of its real intrinsic greatness (Vol. 54, p¹/₂. 301, 302).

By putting the first part of the Lord's question in v. 12 with the latter part of it in v. 13, we can see the fears of the people had become a continual obsession with them every day!

Note how Isaiah prayed about their fears (and possibly, his own), and then, how God answered.

I. ISAIAH'S PRAYER (Isa. 51:9-11).

It seems as though the Lord has been asleep (although Psalm 121 was still true). Isaiah prays as one who seeks to arouse the Lord. He addresses Him as, "the arm of the Lord." Why?

The Lord's arm is first mentioned in Ex. 6:6.

The next time it is mentioned is in Ex. 15:16.

Then we have many references to the Lord's hand, all as His "outstretched arm," in the book of Deuteronomy. See 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8.

But Isaiah mentions the Lord's arm a number of times. See Isa. 49:10, 11; 51:5; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8. (See also 59:1, "the Lord's hand.")

This is the figure of speech which speaks of God's power, an indication that the people recognized their weakness and inadequacy. And so we see, first of all,

- A. Isaiah's plea (v. 9a).
- B. Isaiah's question (vv. 9b, 10).
- C. Isaiah's hope (v. 11).

We can see from Isaiah's prayer that he had been looking backward and forward in order to find comfort.

II. JEHOVAH'S ANSWER (Isa. 51:12-16).

Do you remember Isa. 26:3, 4? The first and only thing that the Lord did with Isaiah was to point Isaiah and the people of Judah to Himself--in four ways:

- A. As the Comforter (v. 12a).
- B. As the Creator (v. 13a).
- C. As the Conqueror (v. 15).
- D. As the Coverer (v. 16).

All of these are built around the Lord's question in vv. 12b, 13. V. 14 seems to be a part of the Lord's rebuke of His people. The problem was that the people had forgotten the Lord!

Concl: Oh, how careful we need to be not to throw reproach upon the Lord! He is never at fault. To make it appear so will only deepen our own gloom, and it will discourage other Christians. The fault is ours, not His! Our vision is so short. Our memory fails us.

What is the solution?

I have two to make:

- 1) One is to spend much time reading and meditating on the Word. None of us reads the Word as much as we could, nor as much as we need to read it.
- 2) Never miss a communion service. That is the purpose, to keep us reminded of the Lord.

Review Isa. 26:3, 4 and Phil. 4:6, 7. When we continually remember who the Lord is, peace and joy can be ours.