

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 20, Isa. 40-41

© John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 20, Isaiah chapters 40 and 41.

Well, I think the hour is upon us. I'm here and you're here and that's all we need. Thank you for coming this evening. I've been feeling, as my mother used to say, a little peaked for the past couple of days and I thought, if I make the effort to get there and nobody else does, that's going to be a real downer.

But here you are. I do. Thank you. If I had gold stars to give out, I would give you all gold stars. This weather is a little bit like the fellow who said, cheer up, it could get worse, so I cheered up and it got worse.

Let's begin with prayer. Father, thank you for laughter. Thank you that in your world you have given us this capacity. Again, like music, we really don't quite understand it.

Why does making funny musical sounds somehow lift our spirits? But it does, and we thank you. Thank you that in your world, even in a gray, snowy, windy day, there is cause for joy. We thank you, Lord, that we know where we are headed.

We know that beyond the sunset, there is a bright summer day for us, for eternity, because of what you've done for us in Jesus Christ. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you for your word in Isaiah. Thank you for what you've been teaching us. Thank you for what you're going to teach us again tonight. And we pray that you'll guide us, direct us, inspire us, and help us to get what's here for each of us. And we'll give you thanks. In your name, amen.

John, could you give us a little, I'm just kind of interested in the prophets, Isaiah particularly. Do you think they sat there and wrote themselves, did they have a strive to basically do this as they just sort of put this out? Or this is such a humongous amount of work, and what are these thoughts? Well, it's sort of like you pay your money and take your choice in the scholarly world. I think almost certainly Isaiah spoke these things in short messages, which were probably transcribed by a disciple.

And then they've been organized together here by Isaiah, or perhaps by one of his intimate disciples. But it's pretty well agreed that the only one of the prophets that may have been written from the outset was Ezekiel. They're longer messages, they're more tightly organized.

Virtually everybody else, the pretty well general agreement is they were spoken as short messages, copied down, and then organized. Okay, we have seen thus far in the book 1 through 6, the call to servanthood. In 7 through 39, trust, is the basis of servanthood.

And you may remember, I won't give you an exam on it, but you may remember that I suggested that in some ways, the whole book is organized on the pattern of chapter 6. That is, a vision of human helplessness in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. A vision of the Lord, His holiness, and His glory filling the earth. A vision of themselves, their uncleanness, their lostness.

An experience of cleansing through fire. And then commissioning. Well, on that basis, this section 7 through 39 would be that vision of helplessness, the vision of the Lord, and to some extent, the vision of themselves, although more of that is going to come.

As I said last week, chapters 36 through 39 establish the case, God can be trusted. If you will trust Him, He will deliver you. But we also saw, particularly last week, in chapters 38 and 39, that Hezekiah is not the promised one from chapters 7 to 12.

That if we're looking for hope, we've got to look beyond Him. He shows us that trust is not merely a one-time thing. One time.

And that our hope is not in human perfectibility. We saw that God took very seriously Hezekiah's claim to have a perfect heart. A heart that was undivided for God.

But that does not mean perfect performance. We Wesleyans need to keep saying that to ourselves. The world out there says, well if you don't perform perfectly, you don't have a perfect heart.

And since none of us perform perfectly, therefore, anybody who claims to have a perfect heart is lying. Well, God does not seem to have thought Hezekiah was lying. He seems to have thought that Hezekiah was telling the truth.

That in terms of his affections, in terms of the direction of his heart, in terms of his purposes, he was one for God. All gods. Without a rival or without a limit.

But his performance is not perfect. So, if there is hope for us, it's in somebody that we haven't yet met in chapters 1 to 39, except in prospect back there in chapter 11 and in chapter 9. Now, I think there's a second reason why the book doesn't end here. So, that's the first reason.

We've established that God is trustworthy, but we haven't figured out what will motivate us to trust God as a regular, settled matter. And then also the issue of, well, who is going to save us then? Who was that child that was predicted back there in chapter 7? So, some questions are left hanging here at the end of 39. There's another question that the Holy Spirit knows, and I think probably He let Isaiah in on the secret, and that is, if God had delivered them from Assyria, as we learned at the very end of chapter 39, He is not going to deliver them from Babylon.

Well, if that's true out there in the future, 150 years in the future actually, won't that call all that we have supposedly learned about God into question? Yeah, He delivered Grandpa and Grandma from Assyria, but He couldn't deliver us from Babylon, could He? So, you just might as well forget that stuff in Isaiah. He was wrong. God is not that trustworthy.

And so, Isaiah, I believe, is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, insight into that new situation out there, in order to fill out the wonderful theology that He's been given thus far. So then, we move to the next section of the book, which is chapters 40 to 55. And I have labeled it, Grace, Motive, and Means for Servanthood.

What can motivate us to trust God on a regular, ongoing, basic level? Grace. God's free, unlimited, undeserved grace. But then the question arises, well, so, is He just going to ignore our sin? Is He just going to say, well, it doesn't matter.

We'll just forget it. I've talked to you about this before in other Bible studies. I don't think I've talked about it here.

But that would raise serious questions. This is a world of cause and effect. You cannot just suspend the effects.

We'd like to. You know, I want to drive my car into a brick wall and have nothing happen. I want to slander my neighbor and not have any effects.

I want to do all the kinds of stuff I shouldn't do and not have to pay any price. That's not the kind of world we live in. Now, the interesting thing, and again, I've said this before, I'll say it again, it's fascinating to me, nobody has a problem with that in the natural world.

Oh, Sweet, that's dumb. You can't drive your car into a brick wall and survive it. That's crazy.

Oh, yeah. But I can commit adultery. And it's not a problem, is it? No.

There are effects. The Bible is very clear. The soul that sins will die.

No ifs, no ands, no buts. Will die. So that raises the issue, how is God going to extend this grace to us? It's one thing for him to want to, but it's another thing for him to be able to.

Well, we deal with that in two sections. First of all, we have the introduction in chapter 40. Then we have the motive in 41 through 48, and the means in 49 through 55.

Several of the themes that are only going to show up down here show up in chapter 40, and that leads me to argue that it is introductory. Again, if you had six or seven commentaries in front of you, you'd find out there's lots of disagreement on some of these issues. There's not too much disagreement between the two sections, but not everybody would see the light like I have and take chapter 40 as an introduction.

But I think it is, and we'll talk about that. Okay. As I commented, one of the favorite, favorite passages in the Bible is not very well translated in almost all translations.

I have the English Standard Version here in front of me. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. That is not a good translation.

In English today, comfort suggests warm fuzzies. Oh, put your arms around them and give them a little hug. In 1611, comfort was a good translation for the Hebrew here, because in 1611, comfort meant to encourage, to fortify.

Comfort, to put some steel in their backbones. The closest good translation today would be encouraged. Encourage my people.

Does that apply to the Holy Spirit being called the comforter? Exactly, exactly. The question was, does that apply to the Holy Spirit being called the comforter? Exactly. The Holy Spirit is the one who comes alongside us to enable us to stand when the world has knocked us down.

When the world says you're worthless, when the world says you're helpless, when the world says you're a fool, the comforter stands up there beside us. He doesn't just put his arm around us and say, it's going to be all right, honey. It's steel in the backbone.

Now, the question that I ask here is, remember, our time frame has changed dramatically. We were in the time frame from 739 to 701 BC. We're now in the time frame of roughly 560 BC.

That's why I say it's 140, 50 years in the future. Now again, most commentators say that's impossible. And again, you have to think about this.

Could I talk to somebody 150 years in the future in 2163? Certainly not in my own power I couldn't. But the question is, could the Holy Spirit inspire somebody to talk to someone 150 years in the future if that was important to the Holy Spirit's purpose in the book? And my answer is, why not? A couple more factors on this, because you will read in the commentaries, yes, there's 1st Isaiah. That's 1 to 39.

There's 2nd Isaiah. That's 40 to 55. And there's 3rd Isaiah.

That's 56 to 66. Now, commentaries are always 25 to 30 years out of date. No scholar today believes that there was a 3rd Isaiah who wrote.

In fact, many today would doubt if there was a 1st Isaiah. 2nd Isaiah, yep, yep, yep, yep. That guy in the exile, he really had it together.

He wrote some great theology here. But where this stuff came from, nobody really knows. And as I said to you before, it was a 400-year-long committee process to put this book together, around this core.

Well, I have to say to you, as I've said before, I have never seen one of the greatest literary pieces in the world put together by a committee. You know what a camel is. It's a horse designed by a committee.

So I don't think so. Now, here's one more factor before I get away from that and get on. It's very interesting that in this part of the book, you have a lot of specific historical details, just sort of aside.

Oh yeah, there's Hezekiah in chapter 22, looking over the pool that he has built. Yeah. Guess what? In the rest of the book, there are almost no historical details.

Why not? Well, one scholar whom I commend for his honesty says, obviously, these later committee members took out those historical details to make it appear that they were written in advance. He's dead now, so I think he knows better. But I think a better explanation is, Isaiah didn't know those historical details.

And he didn't need to know them. The Holy Spirit didn't have to give him, except one big one, the name of their deliverer. I think that's a better explanation for why the historical details are not here.

Yes, he sees the general situation out there. He knows what that is. But I think if you had asked Isaiah, where are the exiles going to be held, he would have said, I don't know.

Just what year are they going to be set free? I think he would say, I don't know. So, to me, that's a rather telling point in favor of the single authorship of the book. Now

there's another factor that I think is even more important that we'll talk about tonight, and then several times in the next couple of weeks.

Okay. What attitude is it that requires encouragement? This is a softball.
Hopelessness.

Discouragement. Now why would the exiles be discouraged? Why would they not?
Okay, okay. All right, all right.

Number one, they would have thought God was defeated. What has been their self-identity through the years? We are the chosen people. Clearly, we are not the chosen people.

Yes, we're the forgotten people. What was special about Jerusalem? The temple. And what was the temple? God's house.

Yeah, God's house is desecrated. Now, I don't know about you, I'm afraid it's a testimony to my small-mindedness. I think if I were God, my reaction would have been, how long do you think I've been putting this off? About a thousand years you've had this coming to you.

No, no. Encourage my people. Encourage my people.

Literally verse two, speaks to the heart of Jerusalem. This is what Boaz did on the threshing floor with Ruth. He spoke to her heart.

In that hour of the night where her whole life hung on a razor's edge. And Boaz spoke to her heart. That's what God wants to do.

But only, he's going to speak to a person who, at least there's a window open there, looking for encouragement. Because I went down, I put disillusionment, defeat, and so forth. And I thought, well, how about that chosen few perhaps, they needed encouragement because they saw some light at the end of the tunnel, but they didn't know what to do with it.

Yes, yes, there's got to be a core there who can receive this encouragement, who can receive this message. And that's absolutely right. The remnant is always in focus.

Always in focus. There's a core there who believe. Their belief is all but shattered, but they still believe.

Yeah, yeah, very good. Her iniquity is pardoned. There's 49 to 55.

How? Well, she's received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Oh, she's paid for it all. Not all of it.

Israel isn't dead yet. So then, the question the exiles are asking is, number one, does God want to deliver? Maybe He's had it with us. If He hasn't been defeated by Babylon, then He's been defeated by our sins.

He didn't want this to happen, but He couldn't do anything about it, finally. So does He want to deliver us? Or does He say, I'm washing my hands of that bunch? I've given them all these opportunities. I've given them all these possibilities, and they have blasted every one of them.

A second question is, can God deliver? Suppose He wants to, but hey, look what these Babylonian gods have done. They strode across the world. Can He deliver? And finally, is He going to deliver? Yeah, He wants to, He can, but that doesn't mean He's going to.

Now, Isaiah knows that they're going to be asking those questions. As I said, he doesn't know where they will be in Babylon. Probably if you had asked him, when is the temple going to be destroyed, he would have said, I don't know.

But I do know what these discouraged, disillusioned people are going to be saying. So, in verses three, four, and five, what's the encouragement that God offers here? What is He saying? Punishment is over. What else? The glory of the Lord will be seen.

All flesh will see it together. Now, where do three through five show up in the New Testament? I've given you the reference there. Who said it? Or about whom was it said? John the Baptist.

John the Baptist. Now again, you see, these Jewish people were just steeped in the scriptures by the time of Christ. They knew them backward, forwards, and sideways.

So, the instant that a new prophet shows up, and there had not been one for 400 years, these people who had had prophets coming out their ears, they were sick to death of prophets. And all of a sudden, bingo, none. And suddenly, here's one.

And almost as soon as he shows up, somebody says, that's Isaiah. That's Isaiah. So what event is verses three, four, and five referring to ultimately? The coming of Christ.

There is His grace revealed, and there is the means whereby He can extend His grace. And what about Yahweh's desire to deliver? What do these verses say about it? Yes, yes. He does not want them to remain in their despair, in their captivity.

He intends to come to them in the wilderness, prepare a way for the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God. I've always been fascinated with R.G. Letourneau. This is the guy who invented earth-moving equipment.

And he just had sort of done it in 37 and 38 and 39 when the war came in. And all that earth-moving equipment you see is R.G. Letourneau's design. I was fascinated because he was Christian.

And somewhere in the late 40s or early 50s, he flew all over the country for his business and then also preaching. And he flew in a converted B-26 bomber. And to a 9 or 10-year-old kid, that was really something.

But I think long, long before Letourneau had the idea of massive earth-moving equipment. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill cut down.

Why? So that God can come to his helpless people. He does not say, now you try and you come to me. If he did, we would be lost in our sins.

But God has come to us in Jesus Christ. And there's hope. Okay.

But let's look now at verses 6, 7, and 8. That's not very encouraging, is it? All flesh is grass, all its beauty like the flower of the field. The grass withers, and the flower fades. How is that encouraging? Exactly.

Babylon. You think Babylon is this gray, towering monster. I want to tell you something.

Babylon is a blade of grass. Yes, you're a blade of grass. But so are they.

Well, what makes the difference between us as grass and them as grass? Look at the last part of verse 8. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. That makes the difference. You and I are grass.

We're the flower of the field. But if, in fact, the word of God has been spoken to us and we have taken it into ourselves, there is the flavor of eternity. Well, we go on to verses 9, 10, and 11.

Zion and Jerusalem have been destroyed. So, how can they be heralds of deliverance? There were still some there, but I think there's something else going on here. God often says things to us when there's no possibility in the present moment of that being realized, but he wants us to take hold of it in the confidence that's what's going to happen.

Dennis Kinlaw had a wonderful way of talking about that. He said, you know, one day Abraham came home with a baby buggy. And Sarah said, what in the world are you doing with that? Well, Sarah, you're going to have a baby.

Abraham, have you looked at the calendar? Well, that's what the Lord said. And so here, he's saying the day's going to come when you folks are going to be telling the good news of God's deliverance. And I think some of those Babylonian exiles looked at each other and said, do you believe that? A lot of them said no, but some of them said, why not? Why not? Well, let's rush on.

So, we've answered that first question. Does God want to deliver? Yes. But now the question is, can God deliver? And that's in verses 12 through 26.

We've got a whole bunch of rhetorical questions. Do you know what a rhetorical question is? A question that assumes a certain answer. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? Who has directed the spirit of the Lord? Whom did he consult? Who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, the path of knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? What's the answer to all those questions? Nobody.

Nobody. And that's a powerful statement over against the polytheism which ruled the ancient world. Whenever the gods did anything, the first thing they did was take counsel.

Because the pantheon was built, and conceived of, on the basis of the royal court. So the king never did anything without consultation. Especially from his trusted counselor magician.

And Isaiah says, there weren't any of those. God did all this on his own, out of his own purposes and intentions. Wow.

Sort of an echo of what God told Job, isn't it? Yep. Yep. Yep.

Job, do you know where the storehouses of the snow are? Nope. Yeah. Very much.

Very much. So, what does that mean about the nations? Verse 15. They're a drop in the bucket.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book that's not very well known on the impact of the King James Version on the English language. And he has lists of phrases like this that are in the English language because of the King James Bible. Drop in a bucket.

Comes right out of the King James. The skin of your teeth. Right out of the King James.

And there's just pages of those things that the King James... And you know, I looked at my grandmother's library. And it was a King James Bible and a concordance and a Bible dictionary. And with those, she taught a Lady Sunday School class for 40 years.

Many of those people who came over the mountains came with a Bible. And that was the source of their stories. That was the source of their imaginations.

Well, that's free. Okay. He takes up the coastlands.

I comment on this in the background on this next week's lesson. Coastlands or islands signify the end of the earth. So when it says he takes up the coastlands, it means he takes up the whole earth.

You know, the whole cosmos fits his span. That's a pretty big God. He is not the cosmos.

He holds the cosmos within the span of his hand. So then, we come down to it in verses 18, 19, and 20. So what are you going to compare God to? Are you going to compare him to an idol for heaven's sake? Or for hell's sake, as the case might be? Come on.

An idol? A craftsman casts it. A goldsmith overlays it with gold. Casts for its silver chains.

He who is too impoverished for such an offering chooses wood that will not rot, and seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that cannot move. You're going to compare me to that? Do you think these Babylonian idols are in the same class with me? If he were speaking today, I think he would say, give me a break. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told to you? Verse 22 has always been fascinating to me.

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth. Now, they had never been in the Sears Tower. They have never been on a really, really high mountain like Pikes Peak.

How did Isaiah know? I don't think he's necessarily talking about the globe here. But he understands our perspective is a circle. Fascinating.

Okay. I was not aware of that. Fascinating.

Fascinating. Okay. Verse 23.

We don't have to be afraid of the gods. We don't have to be afraid of the nations. What is verse 23 saying we don't have to be afraid of? The princes and the rulers of earth.

Then in verses 25 and 26, he comes back. Now, I mentioned in the background that the stars were considered to be the gods. The host of heaven is the gods.

So, is Yahweh one of the gods? No. He calls the gods out by name. Come on, Orion, you're being slow tonight.

Come on. Shine a little brighter. Now, it's interesting.

That has stuck right with us. What is the name of the morning star? Venus. In Greece and in Rome, in Sumer 5,000 years ago, Venus was the morning star.

In fact, the symbol in Sumerian, which began as a pictographic language, the Sumerian word for god is dir. The pictogram for that word is star. So, we haven't gone very far.

The Sumerians, 5,000 years ago, were calling the morning star Venus, or their name was Inanna. But there it is. So, who are you going to compare me to? Who did I take counsel with? You're going to compare me to an idol? Do you think the nations pose any problem for me? Do you think the rulers of the nations pose a problem for me? Do you think the host of heaven poses a problem for me? No, no.

Can God deliver? And I erased it all. Yes, yes, yes. But is he going to deliver? What about verse 27? What are they saying? God is not paying any attention to us.

Yes, God wants to deliver. Yes, God can deliver. But there's no evidence whatsoever that he's going to.

Otherwise, he would have done it yesterday when I told him to. I don't know about you, but I'm pretty good at telling God what to do and when. And I often think that probably prevents him from doing it when he planned to.

Why do you say my way is hidden from the Lord? My right is disregarded by my God. Have you not known? Have you not heard? Yahweh is the everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth.

Now, words for creation occur more in this section of Isaiah than anywhere else in the Bible. More than Genesis by a lot. More than any place else.

And so I want you to keep your eye on that as we go along and think, Why is Isaiah stressing this? He doesn't faint. He doesn't grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint. To him who has no might, he increases strength. Even you shall faint and be weary.

Young men shall fall exhausted, but they who trust. Trust. And you remember what we've talked about with the whole concept of weight.

It is weighing, entrusting expectation. And that is hard for us children of Adam and Eve. I want what I want now.

And I don't want to wait. And God says, well, you're going to. Now the question is, what attitude will you wait with? Confident expectation or disillusioned discouragement? Yes? It's been braided or to be blended.

They use tea and water. And they say, is it tea or is it water? Well, it's tea and it's water. It's been blended.

It's been fused. It's been braided together. Weighting and trusting, I assume you mean.

Yes. And, yes? This is a bit metamorphic. We have to believe that he does understand us.

Oh, it is. It is. God.

Here's a very simplistic illustration. But, somewhere, there's a huge computer that knows you. With all that massive data in there, punch in the right numbers, and up comes Mary Jo Morrow.

I do not want to reduce God to a computer. But that has helped me in thinking about the one who made all this world has access to all its data instantly. And he knows what you're thinking.

He knows what I'm thinking. He knows what we feel. And, in a real sense, that has... And, again, I want to be awfully careful how I say this.

But, in a real sense, it has become more an experiential reality for him since Jesus. He knew, theoretically, everything there was to be about humanity before Jesus came. But now he knows it experientially.

Yeah. After they touched him. I mean, after Jesus came, he came with a forgery.

But he's still with God. Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

And that's why I say, I want to be awfully, awfully careful. There wasn't anything God didn't know before Jesus came. But, but, as someone has said, probably Kinlaw, there is now a human being sitting on the throne of heaven.

Yes. Just a quick question to keep in mind as we've been going through all this. With the whole of Israel already having a deliverance long back in their past with Egypt and Pharaoh and seeing a lot of this being repeated again, what, I mean, these children, the people who were in this were called by God to teach their children and their children, generation after generation, these stories of God's deliverance, the stories of God's hand.

So, what happened? Is it just because of the hardness of the heart that it got lost? But that kind of goes against the whole idea that God sovereignly wanted that to happen. So, help me out with this. How did you get from back there to now we're at here? How did you remind yourself? Take a good long look at the church.

What happens, what happens is that we constantly are getting sideswiped by the same old issue. I have needs. I don't think God knows about my needs or if he does, he doesn't care about them.

So, the only way I'm ever going to get my needs supplied is I'm going to have to do it myself. God gets in the way. Exactly, exactly.

And so that all the good teaching, Karen and I were talking about this on the way in. Someone that we both know, a very widely known teacher, and her son blames all his problems on her. And again, you didn't supply my needs.

So, would they have remembered these stories though? I think so, I think so. It's not like it's totally off their mind grid. No, no, no.

Again, I think you had the whole spectrum. I think you had people over here who remembered and believed and were brokenhearted at what was happening. I think you had people over here for whom their membership in the nation was simply a matter of birthright.

And then everybody on the spectrum in between. And again, I take that from the present. So there it is.

I've always loved the order of that last verse, 31. Mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Somebody said it's easy to soar with the

eagles, it's easy to run with the champions, but it's walking with the turkeys that is so hard.

And that's it. We have great revivals and we soar with the eagles. But as the man said, I don't care how high they jump, I want to see how straight they walk when they come down.

And it's that daily, steady walk of faithfulness that we desperately need the Holy Spirit for. We often think, oh yes, I've got this terrific big task, oh Holy Spirit help me, help me, help me. But it's just today and I can take it from here.

Nope. Okay, 10 minutes for a chapter. What else is new? Well, 40 is very important.

All right, let's push on to 41. In verses 1 through 7, first of all, in verses 1 through 4, what is Yahweh claiming to have done? He has raised up Cyrus. Yep.

I have called one from the east. And Persia, of course, is to the east of Babylon. It is where Iraq is today.

Babylon is where Iran is today. I've called one from the east. And here we are with another one of these rhetorical questions.

Who did this? I did it. He answers the question for us. Yahweh, the first and with the last, I am He.

Alpha and omega, that's exactly right. Now the Hebrew here says, and just so you know that I know Hebrew. No, this is writing four words.

The order of Hebrew proves that we were all left-handed once. Okay. What that literally says is, I am He, but the Greek translates this as ego eimi, I am.

So, all those I am's of Jesus are based right here. Before Abraham was, I am. Anihu, I'm it.

Hebrew does not have a neuter pronoun, but I think if it did, that's the way they would understand it. I'm it, I am. I'm everything.

I am. And there is no other. So, what's the response then of the nations in 5, 6, and 7? They are panicked.

They're terrified. Oh my goodness, the ends of the earth have seen and are afraid and tremble. So, what's their response? Build a new idol.

The bigger, the better. Yeah, yeah. Our old idols have failed, so let's build a new one.

You don't have to go very far from right here to see that all around us. That didn't save us, so let's construct this and it will. If you think the world can save you, then you're condemned to making new saviors every time a new problem arises.

But what does God say to Israel? Verse 8. Don't be afraid. Now, the next thing though that I want to talk about before we go back to that is, what does he call Jacob and Israel? Israel, what? My servant, Jacob, my chosen. We're going to see that pair over and over again in these chapters.

Surely God has cast us off. Surely our sins have finally risen so high that even God has to say, I can't do anything more with that bunch. I'm through with them.

But no, no. You are my servant. You are my chosen.

So, the world may be caught up in terror as a new world emperor arises. You don't have to be. You don't have to be.

You're my servant. I've chosen you and not cast you off. Now, we're going to have five reasons not to fear in these next several chapters.

Here comes the first one. What is it in verse 10? I am with you. What was the name of that kid back in chapter 7? What was his name? God is with us.

Emmanuel. That's with us. And here's L, God.

Oh God, surely you're not with us. We've sinned. We've broken all our promises.

We've done all these things we shouldn't have done. Surely you're not with us. Yes, I am.

I'm in here with you. I'm not somewhere far away. I'm in the middle of this despair, discouragement, and disillusionment.

I'm here with you and you don't need to be afraid. 11 and 12 say, those who are incensed against you will be put to shame and confounded. Verse 12, you shall seek those who contend with you, but you won't find them.

Why? Verse 13, here comes the second reason for not fearing. He has a firm grip. I will help you.

That's a wonderful thought. I'll try not to preach the whole sermon tonight, being as it's 8 o'clock. But he doesn't say, sit down and shut up and I'll do it.

Neither does he say, you do it and I'll watch. He says, I'll help you. That's a wonderful thought.

That's a wonderful thought. Come on. Let's go together.

You start and I'll finish. I'll help you. Exactly.

Exactly. Exactly. Yes.

Okay. Well, it's 8 o'clock and there's a good bit more here in chapter 41. So, we're going to stop there and we'll pick up a bit of that next time and rush on.

These chapters are long and packed. So, it'll be a stretch for me, but I'll do my best.

Let's pray together. Thank you, Lord God, that you deign to help us. We, with our little stumbling operations, and you delight to enter in with us. And to strengthen our hands and to guide our minds.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 20, Isaiah chapters 40 and 41.