

Text— Isaiah 51:9-16

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our Scripture selection is addressed to God's people, Christians, for in Isaiah 51:7-8, just prior to our text, we read, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

Realize that Christians and only Christians are people that know RIGHTEOUSNESS, the people in whose heart is GOD'S LAW, GOD'S WORD, because it is by God-given faith in Jesus that we Christians have Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to us, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." — As Romans 3:22-26 reports.

However, we Christians still dwell in sinful flesh while living in this world; consequently, because we are weak, we often fear the hate-filled speech of sinful human beings who know not the Lord. But, despite our weaknesses, the Lord promises us Christians that our salvation endures, and that the unbelievers who revile us will receive punishment which is death— not only temporal death but eternal death in hell, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," as Mark 9:44 states.

Nevertheless, we are still fearful at times; therefore, our sermon text can be of help to us as it teaches:

"HOW TO AVOID BEING AFRAID OF SINFUL MEN"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Avoid being afraid of sinful men by persisting in a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) Avoid being afraid of sinful men by heeding the Lord's Word and remembering what He has done and will do

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Verses 9 & 10, ----- (Isaiah 51:9-10)

The opening two verses of our text are actually a prayer which could be uttered by the fearful Israelite believers of old who had been rescued from bondage in Egypt, and stands as a model prayer for us fearful Christians today.

Think about the words: *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?*

My friends, the ARM OF THE LORD, the Arm of Jehovah, is none other than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Strength of God who alone delivers us from our greatest enemies. It's as we read in Isaiah 53:1-6, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our

griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Hence, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior has delivered us from sin, death, and the devil! Jesus Christ is true man – sinless man – and true God, for Colossians 2:9 reports, “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And, since Jesus Christ is true God in addition to being true man, He is also, as Psalm 46:1-3 informs us, “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Indeed, Jesus is with us, so we need not fear anything as long as we place and keep our full trust and confidence in Him.

Consider the case with the Israelite believers in Isaiah’s time, who when fearful were to pray, as we read earlier: *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?*

“Rahab” (meaning “pride”) is a descriptive title of Egypt and “dragon” is a name for Pharaoh, for Ezekiel 29:3 declares, “Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.” Now recall that the children of Israel were powerfully delivered from bitter bondage in Egypt by the power of the Lord, for we read in Exodus 14:21-22, “Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong

east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed the great Deliverer of His people, for the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” Accordingly, we Christians today need to regularly pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing His awesome power and having full trust and confidence in Him as our Deliverer from doom.

Fellow believers in Christ, we have the Lord’s promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Hebrews 13:5-6)

Therefore, let each and every one of us avoid being afraid of sinful men by persisting in a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us learn to avoid being afraid of sinful men by heeding the Lord’s Word and remembering what He has done and will do.

In the opening two verses of our Scripture selection we’ve already been reminded of the mighty wonders done by the Lord when He brought the Israelites out from bitter bondage in Egypt. More importantly, we have seen that JESUS CHRIST IS ARM OF THE LORD who has rescued us from sin, death and the devil by His powerful atoning work, and that He will never leave us or forsake us. Accordingly, we certainly can avoid being afraid of sinful men by remembering what

our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has already done for us, because He is still our all-powerful God and Helper who promises His faithful followers in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Thus, we Christians can and should boldly say with the Psalmist, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6)

Verse 11, ----- (Isaiah 51:11)

"Zion" is the Church of God, for Hebrews 12:22-24 declares to all Christians, "ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Hence, our text promises you, me, and all other sincere believers in Jesus Christ a wonderful future in glory when it says: *Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

Fellow Christians, it's as 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 states: "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Thus, we can avoid being afraid of sinful men by heeding the Lord's Word and remembering what He will yet do for us. Heavenly bliss awaits us! Our future is as Revelation 21:4 declares, where we read, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Yes, eternity with our Savior in His visible presence with continual joy and happiness is our wonderful future!

Verses 12 & 13, ----- (Isaiah 51:12-13)

It is the Lord God who says to all Christians: *I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?*

My friends, contrary to man's science-falsely-so-called which teaches that man came into being by accident and evolution; the truth is, GOD CREATED man, for Holy Writ reports, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 100:3) Thus, Holy Scripture supplies us with the REAL FACTS.

So, fellow Christians, now stop and think about WHO it is that comforts us with the words of our sermon text— it is THE ALL-POWERFUL ONE TRUE GOD, OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER AND SANCTIFIER. Therefore, we are utterly foolish when we are afraid of sinful men since they do not endure but will die after their short life-span on earth. No wonder our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, said to His believing followers in John 14:26-27, "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Oh, we Christians today have no need to be afraid of sinful men since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy

Ghost – the one true Triune God – will bring us safely home to heaven if we do not turn from Him and reject Him and His Holy Word.

Therefore, let us all avoid being afraid of sinful men by truly heeding the Lord's Word and remembering what He has done and will do. Let the unbelieving oppressors be filled with fury, they cannot do us any permanent harm since God is with us.

Verses 14-16, ----- (Isaiah 51:14-16)

Captive exiles – prisoners on earth, like the Jews were of old when taken to Babylon – hasten to be freed from captivity and to once again have plentiful food for the body. And yet, all of man's efforts to free himself cannot free himself from the bondage of sin which is something ONLY GOD can do and has done in Christ Jesus our Lord, who, as Ephesians 4:8 relates, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The LORD God – Jehovah Eloheem, the one true God who is three divine Persons – is all powerful as He commands and controls both wind and wave and everything else. Therefore, let us avoid being afraid of sinful men by heeding the Lord's Word and remembering what He has done and will do. Yes, let us never forget, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

Listen again to the last verse of our sermon text in which the LORD God says: *I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.*

Take it to heart that the Lord God has given us His WORD, the Holy Scriptures, putting those words in our minds and hearts that we may speak them from our mouth as we read the Holy Bible, thereby assuring us by His Word that we Christians are His Zion, His people, His Church whom He will guard with His mighty hand that He may bring us safely home to heaven when He determines the time is right. Therefore, I repeat, let us avoid being afraid of sinful men by heeding the Lord's Word and remembering what He has done and will do.

Fellow Christians, we are so very blessed in having God's Word, the pure preserved Holy Scriptures, available to us for reading, meditation, memorization, education, and comfort. It's as we are taught in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, "the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And so, the psalmist rightly confesses to the Lord, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:130 & 105)

Think about it. God's Word, His Law, shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. God's Word, the Gospel of Christ, shows us our one true Savior, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Fellow Christians, if not for God touching us with His Word we would all be lost and damned, for God through His Holy Word has shown us our sin, brought us to repentance, and gifted us with faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. It's as Romans 10:17 plainly states, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." All thanks and praise be to the LORD!

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward remembering what our sermon text has taught us regarding how to avoid being afraid of

sinful men— having a living faith in Christ, heeding the Lord’s Word and remembering what He has done and will do. Amen.

m.e.l.