

**Certain Truth Even in Uncertain Times**  
**Isaiah 41:10**

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**Text Introduction:** What's going to happen in 2014? It's always something. It's always something to worry about? In my lifetime we have moved from year to year collectively worried about one thing or the other. Perhaps the greatest example of this collective worry involving moving from one year to the next was 1999-2000 (Y2K as people began to call it). I never will forget the phone call that I got from a well-meaning member of my church. He advised me to take all of my money out of the bank and just operate on cash until everything settled down.

We have entered some years with war or the threat of war on our minds. Even last year, there was the fear of the federal government "falling off the fiscal cliff." Remember that? Some of you can't even remember that, but this time last year to hear some of the talking heads on television, we should be surprised that we are even here this morning.

All of this worry reminds me of the story of a man named J. Arthur Rank—an early pioneer in the film industry in Great Britain and also a Christian. He spoke of a time that he was so worried about so many things. He decided it was occupying too much of his attention, so he promised himself that he would give himself to worry only one day a week—Wednesday. So, as the week progressed and he found himself worried about something, he would write it down and put it in a box he called his "Wednesday Worry Box." He concluded after some time that only 1/3 of the things that he wrote down still needed to be worried about by the time Wednesday came.

There's got to be a better way to all of our fears and worry. There's got to be a better way than even worrying on Wednesday. In this one verse of Isaiah, I see a better way. It's a good verse to hang our hearts and hopes on as we move from one year to the next.

**Text:** Do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be afraid, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you; I will help you;  
I will hold on to you with My righteous right hand.

**Introduction:** Isaiah faced much more unsettling times than we do. Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Second Kings 15-20 gives us a reference point for the time of Isaiah's prophecy. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah's prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah's prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry. As one commentator put it, "Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins

of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked.”<sup>1</sup>

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are given to this prophetic message of God’s judgment against sin. Interestingly, though, a shift occurs at chapter 40. In chapters 40 through the rest of the book, God comforts the people. Just from this two fold outline of the book, we get a balanced view of our God. On the one hand, He demands righteousness; but on the other hand, He is a God of grace and mercy.

But, back to Isaiah...God gave Isaiah a word of certain truth that would carry him through the uncertain days. I pray that it is a verse that will guide us in any uncertain days that we might encounter. In this one verse of Scripture, we see 2 statements of “Do not fear,” 2 statements of “I am,” and 3 statements of “I will.” From this sequence we can understand 5 certain truths for our uncertain times.

**1. God’s presence with us!**

*“I am with you”*

Our perspective ought to change when we begin to acknowledge God’s presence in our lives. Isaiah 6 can serve as an example. Isaiah came to the Temple with fear, but he left with faith. What made the difference? The difference was the acknowledgement of God’s presence.

God’s promise of His presence has always been God’s way of helping us deal with our fear. When Moses questioned what he should say and do in going before Pharaoh, God simply said, “I will be with you.” When the disciples were afraid, Jesus promised His spirit would remain with them.

**2. God’s position with us!**

*“I am your God”*

God’s position with us is very personal. He knows us exactly. He knows us personally. He is God, but He is our God. We learn in this phrase that not only is God with us, but He is for us. And, as the Apostle Paul said in Romans, “if God is for us, who can be against us?”

**3. God’s power with us!**

*“I will strengthen you”*

Isaiah 40:18-26 reveals God’s power. How dare we say that our future is uncertain!

**4. God’s provision for us!**

*“I will help you”*

Hudson Taylor was a great pioneer in missions, living between 1832 and 1905. His missionary organization was called the China Inland Mission. It is believed that at one time 1/5 of all missionaries to China were in the China Inland Mission. Taylor’s life was wrought with great difficulty. He struggled with poor health and depression. His wife died at age 33 and 4 of their 8 children died before they were 10 years old. In addition to these personal crises, there was the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.

constant strain of finances being dependent upon others. But, Taylor trusted in God as his provider in a most radical way. At one point in the ministry, Taylor believed that God was leading him to grow the organization and invite other missionaries to China. In a letter to a friend, Taylor wrote, “We have 27 cents and all of the promises of God.”

**5. God will preserve us!**

*“I will uphold you”*

***So What?***

**Don't be afraid!**

We are right back to where we started. I don't know what is going to happen in 2014, but I have lived long enough to know this—some of what will happen will not be pleasant. For some, things will happen that will unsettle us and shake us at the very core of our faith. When that happens what are you going to do? Panic? Run? Be afraid? Or trust, knowing that God's presence is with us. Trust, knowing that God's position is with us. His power is with us. His provision is for us. And He will preserve us.

A children's Sunday School class was working on memorizing the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. One little boy was having a particularly difficult time learning the Psalm, but perhaps he got the essence of the Psalm right when he said:

“The Lord is my shepherd and that's all I need to know.”