

## The Order of the Day

### Isaiah 41:10

This past week I came across a list of some indoor activities to do while we are all in this mode of social distancing. It seems like we have more time on our hands now that many of the places we enjoy going to are now temporarily closed or have limited business hours. Some people are working from home to help curb the virus. So here are some things you can do with all this time on your hands.

- Sort out and scrap book old photos
- Research your next vacation
- Prepare and freeze meals
- Start a gratitude journal
- Write letters to or call up friends
- Research something you have always wanted to do
- Write an advice letter to the teenager you were or write to yourself and don't open it for another 5 or 10 years from now
- Attend a virtual symphony
- Catch up on old movies
- Write a fictional story or your biography
- Read books that are on the "when I have time" list
- Make a cookbook
- Play board games
- Design your dream house
- Re-arrange the furniture
- Call someone who lives alone
- Host a Skype dinner party
- Create an indoor treasure hunt for the family
- Do a science project
- Take some supplies/groceries to someone in need
- Create your own indoor miniature golf course
- Buy a nerf basketball set and shoot hoops
- Do a Bible study over the phone or via Skype or facetime with a friend

For sure, life has changed for the time being. Stay connected through phone calls and other social media platforms. We're working through what services will look like for the interim during this crisis and what we can do going forward through live streaming. Eventually we will be able to meet again, so hang in there. In the meantime listen to our messages on line or find a service on TV to continue getting fed spiritually.

I was talking to Kathy Lampe a couple days ago and said to her that when this is all over, we should throw a big party to celebrate.

In the meantime, we do what we can. This week I want to address the issue of the corona virus and our response as Christians.

Next week my plan is to return to Genesis and the message I had prepared last week.

Then we have Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. My hope is to also do a Good Friday service via Skype or something else. I will record and put each sermon on our website and also try streaming through Skype or something else. I'm encouraging you to download that on your laptop if you haven't already and send me your username. I can then generate a call list for those services. I am learning a lot and have a lot more to learn.

Every day we wake up to new information about what is happening in our state, our nation and around the world. In the blink of an eye the landscape changes. We look around and people are in a panic. It's more than just genuine concern, for many it's hysteria. I'm sure there's a phobia for pandemics. But let's be clear that this isn't the first global crisis. Most of us are old enough to remember Y2K and the fear that the world was going to end. And we can't forget how the nation was gripped in fear after 9/11. In both events Bible scholars poured over old notes and seemingly obscure passages to try and make a connection for the end times. Secularists worried about a global economic meltdown; banks feared failure.

Here we are in another. Some think it's all a bunch of hype. Others fear the worst. And certainly, we should be concerned and do what is prudent while we are in the middle of it. We are called to be both wise and responsible in such times. Don't get me wrong, there's plenty to be concerned about.

Paying bills

Routine medical treatments

The falling stock market

Shortages of certain household goods and groceries

Layoffs, closures, unemployment

Travel

So in the middle of all this as we make adjustments each day, how are we to respond as Christians in this crisis?

Several years ago, the Newsboys did a song that I think speaks to the Christian heart on the matter. It is a call to believe.

In this time of desperation  
When all we know is doubt and fear  
There is only one foundation  
We believe, We believe

In this broken generation  
When all is dark, You help us see  
There is only one salvation  
We believe, we believe

We believe in God the Father  
We believe in Jesus Christ  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
And He's given us new life  
We believe in the crucifixion  
We believe that He conquered death  
We believe in the resurrection  
And He's coming back again, we believe

So, let our faith be more than anthems  
Greater than the songs we sing  
And in our weakness and temptations  
We believe, we believe.

CCLI: 1292471

Songwriters: Jeremy Lynn Epperson, Matt Hooper, Richie Fike

In any crisis, there are still and always will be only two choices. We can live by faith or we can live in fear. We can live in anxiety or we can live in awareness of God's presence, plan and purpose in it all. We can panic or be at peace.

For this morning, I want to turn to a verse that I trust will be of comfort and encouragement to you not only in these difficult days with the pandemic they call the corona virus, but also for any personal life events that want to derail us, upset us and cause us to worry. This is my favorite and life verse.

We will notice four things about God in this verse as it relates to fear. Three are stated, one is implied.

All are important if we will eliminate fear.  
God's presence eliminates fear  
God's person eliminates fear  
God's provision eliminates fear  
God's peace eliminates fear

Take your Bibles and turn to **Isaiah 41:10**.

## I. GOD'S PRESENCE ELIMINATES FEAR "Fear not, for I am with you."

If it's worth saying once, it's worth saying a thousand times. The Bible gives us 365 verses that in one form or another tell us not to fear.  
Don't be afraid  
Don't fear  
Take courage  
Be strong

The word fear has been translated a number of different ways in the Old Testament. Fear is the main one. Others include terror, horror, reverence and awe. This verse isn't speaking about reverence or awe as those refer to how we are to view God.

In this context, think of fear as shaking or quaking. King Belshazzar comes to mind when he saw the handwriting on the wall. It says his knees knocked together out of fear.

In **Deuteronomy 5:5** the Israelites were fearful when they saw the fire of God on Mt. Sinai.

In **I Samuel 7:7** the Israelites were afraid when they heard that the Philistines were mobilizing to attack.

After fleeing Saul for his life we read in **I Samuel 21:13** that David was fearful of the Philistine King Achish, who recognized him and his exploits.

In **Genesis 31:31** Jacob was afraid of Laban because he thought Laban would take his family.

In **Genesis 3:10** Adam and Eve were afraid of God after they had eaten the forbidden fruit.

Take a quick look back through the history of your life and I am sure there are times when you felt afraid of something.

The dentist  
The neighbor's dog  
Getting your driver's license  
A medical exam  
Your first job interview

There is no shortage of things that can make us afraid.

Fear has been defined as an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by the anticipation or awareness of danger. It can either be real or perceived, past, present, or future. It is brought on by some danger or threat.

We can be afraid of something that happened in the past where we fear the consequences will catch up. We can fear something happening right now. People fear this virus and the economic fallout. We can be afraid of something in the future that hasn't even happened yet and may not even happen, but something we still fear.

Dennis Davison, stated in a message that “fear often shows up in our lives when we are at risk of losing something – our wealth, health, reputation, position, safety, family, friends...When fear takes over, it cripples us emotionally and saps us spiritually. A fearful spirit is more vulnerable to the enemy who tempts us to compromise biblical convictions and to take matters into our own hands.”

Recall that both Abraham and Isaac feared for their lives and so lied to save their own skin, even though they had the covenant promise of God.

In J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*, Azog and his evil horde have cornered Gandalf, Biblo and the dwarves they are accompanying up some trees on the edge of a steep cliff. Sitting atop his wolf-like creature called a Warg, Azog sniffs the air and says “Do you smell it? The scent of fear?”

I can't tell you what fear smells like but I can tell you what it feels like and what the result of it looks like. Satan will use the emotion of fear to keep you from enjoying what God has planned for you.

Because the information is changing daily and cases continue to increase, it's easy to become anxious, but this verse is telling us not to be afraid. Some psychologists and psychiatrists will use a type of self-help audio messaging to get their clients to change some cognitive response to personal fears. They will listen to tapes as a way of changing what they believe about a fear or a situation.

You are a good person  
You are strong  
You are courageous  
You can do this

When it comes to being afraid of something it's like playing a message over and over in your head telling you that this is something you should be afraid of. It's like when Satan whispered in Eve's ear that she couldn't trust God. You better take matters in your own hands. He told her to be afraid of God.

**What are some passages that help us overcome the temptation to be afraid?** I hope you know them.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not in your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”**

Faith or trust leaves no room for self or doubt or fear. The word “all” suggests that we put the full weight of our trust in God. Every day in everything we put our trust in God. From the moment we open our eyes and throughout the day until we close them, we trust God in the big and little things – in all things. And then when we close our eyes, we trust Him to continue to watch over us while we sleep until we open them again. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week 365 days a year we trust God.

The Message – **Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track.”**

Trust in the Lord through all of this. He is still on the throne and in control. He is not up in heaven wringing his hands Sweating about what will happen next. He's got this.

**Psalm 3:1-6**

**Psalm 27:1-3**

**Psalm 56:3 “When I am afraid, I will trust in You.”**

In this passage and in **Proverbs 3:5** the word trust means to lean on. So literally we are to lean on God

and nothing else. As Pastor Don used to say “He’s God and we’re not.”

**So when are you afraid? Has all the news over the past couple of weeks made you anxious?** This is a call to lean on God with your whole weight. Give it to Him. **I Peter 5:7** reminds us to **“Cast ALL your cares on Him because He cares for you.”**

Other comforting words come from **Psalm 91:1-6.**

There it is right in **verse 6** – **“Don’t be afraid of any pestilence,”** which the dictionary defines as any virulent or fatal contagious or infectious disease, especially of epidemic proportions.

Shortly before Hitler came to power in 1933 Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer reassured his congregation in a message stating **“God stands above all...”**

In our verse, the tense of the wording indicates that not fearing is to be an ongoing attitude starting with right now and every now as long as there are days. Or to say it another way, stop being afraid.

Why? Because God is with us.

**Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me...”**

In **Matthew 28:20** Jesus said He would be with us till the end of the age.

In **Hebrews 13:5** we have the confident assurance of knowing the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. This confidence is based on His faithfulness.

In the context of **Isaiah 41:10**, God had made a covenant with Israel that was unconditional. It would not be broken so they had nothing to fear. God has made a covenant with us through our faith in His Son, Jesus, giving us the promise of His presence at all times.

Charles Stanley writes **“Being free from fear requires you to step out in faith. You must recognize and admit that the basic cause of your fear is your failure to trust in the sovereignty of God. You must also make a choice to be courageous – to take your eyes off the cause of your**

**apprehension, and gaze upon God instead.”**

I trust that God’s presence through all this is comforting to you. If so, you have been able to rest assured that there is nothing to fear.

In a message titled “Fear Not” Charles Spurgeon ended his sermon with this poem.

**Ye trembling souls, dismiss your fears;  
Be mercy all your theme:  
Mercy, which, like a river, flows  
In one continuous stream.**

**Fear not the powers of earth and hell;  
God will these powers restrain;  
His mighty arm their rage repel,  
And make their efforts vain.**

**Fear not the want of outward good;  
He will for his provide,  
Grant them supplies of daily food,  
And all they need beside.**

**Fear not that He will e’er forsake,  
Or leave His work undone;  
He’s faithful to His promises –  
And faithful to the His son.**

**Fear not the terrors of the grave,  
Or death’s tremendous stick;  
He will from endless wrath prevail-  
To endless glorious bring.**

God’s presence eliminates fear.

God’s person eliminates fear.

## **II. GOD’S PERSON ELIMINATES FEAR “Be not dismayed, for I am your God.”**

To be dismayed means to have a loss of power. It is to make afraid or discouraged at the prospect of trouble or danger, to fill with apprehension or alarm, to be shattered, broken or terrified. To be dismayed results from some difficulty or problem that we don’t quite know how to resolve.

**I Samuel 17:11 “On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.”**

Right now there are a lot of unanswered questions.

How much longer will this last?  
 Will life ever be normal again?  
 Will stores get more products?  
 If I feel sick, where should I go, what should I do?  
 Will my savings hold out?  
 Will I lose my job, my house, my car?

Not having any answers can cause us to be dismayed.

This statement is in the same tense as the one before it. "Stop being dismayed."

**Deuteronomy 31:8** "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

**Joshua 8:1** "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'"

Maybe you're thinking of the same hymn I am.

Be not dismayed whate'er betide;  
 God will take care of you.  
 Beneath His wings of love abide;  
 God will take care of you.

Thro' days of toil when heart doth fail;  
 God will take care of you.  
 When dangers fierce your path assail;  
 God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,  
 God will take care of you.  
 Lean, weary one, upon His breast;  
 God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,  
 Through every day, o'er all the way.  
 He will take care of you;  
 God will take care of you.

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**Why is there no reason for us to be dismayed?**  
 Because God is a personal God. "**For I am your God.**" He cares for you. If He knows when a sparrow falls, He knows what you are going through. Nothing is missed by His all-seeing eye.

Overwhelmed by the prospect of returning to Egypt,

a place from which he had been banished, Moses was fearful and dismayed. God reassured him that he did not go alone. He was afraid of how the Israelites would react to his message of deliverance after 400 years of crying out to what appeared to them to be an absent, uncaring God, God reassured Moses and told him to tell them that the "I AM" had sent him.

If God is your God, then you have no reason to be dismayed. God's person eliminates fear. God's provision eliminates fear.

**III. GOD'S PROVISION ELIMINATES FEAR**  
**"I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."**

**Psalm 29:11** "The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace."

**Isaiah 40:29** "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

Corrie ten Boom once said "In times of fear I don't wrestle, I nestle."

Learn to find your strength in God.

If all that is going on today finds you weak and afraid let Paul's words be of encouragement and comfort to you today.

**II Corinthians 12:9-10** "But He [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

To strengthen means to feel or be made strong, to make secure or firm.

**Deuteronomy 31:6**  
**Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18 – be courageous**

Be strong today in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Then we are told that God will help us. It's a word that means to support or save. Generally it indicates military assistance, but in this context the assistance comes from our all-powerful God.

Some names in the Old Testament are a testimony to God's help.

Azarel – God has helped.

Azriel – My God is help

Azariah – The Lord has helped.

He not only strengthens and helps, he also upholds us with His righteous right hand. In Scripture the right hand speaks of power. The word uphold means to grasp or lay hold of or hold fast. So the verse is saying that God's powerful and righteous right hand grasps ahold of us and holds us up so that there is nothing we need to fear or cause us to be dismayed. He will not leave those who are His.

His presence, His person, and His provision eliminate any fear or dismay we might experience in times like this leaving us with lasting peace. God's peace eliminates fear, and with this I close.

#### **IV. GOD'S PEACE ELIMINATES FEAR**

**Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

This is God's invitation to bring all our worries to Him through prayer so that He can settle our otherwise anxious heart. When we give Him our requests, all of them, with a heart of thanksgiving, He surrounds our heart and mind with His peace, a peace that we can't begin to comprehend. So today find reason to give thanks to God in the midst of all that's going on around us because He is our God.

The admonition not to fear is repeated throughout the book of Isaiah and in each instance, God provides reasons why the Israelites didn't need to be afraid. No matter what is going on in the world or in our lives personally, God gives us the strength and the help to go through it.

**Isaiah 41:13-14 “For I the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I Myself will help you,’ declares the Lord.”**

**Matthew Henry writes that “The scope of this passage is to silence fear and encourage the faith of the servants who are in distress (providing us with) caution, counsel and comfort – fear not.”**

God won't forsake us because He has made us and He has redeemed us and He has a purpose for us in all of this.

**Isaiah 44:8 “Do not tremble, do not be afraid...You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides Me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”**

If you are fearful today, you are acting as if God is not near you, as if God is not your God, as if God is incapable of seeing you through it. Trust Him with all your heart and receive His peace in it.

This verse gives two commands:

**Don't be afraid**

**Don't be dismayed**

This verse gives two reasons:

**God is with us**

**God is our God**

This verse gives three promises:

**God will strengthen us**

**God will help us**

**God will uphold us with His righteous right hand**

**“When I am afraid, I will trust in Him.”**