

Isaiah 41:1-18

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[0 : 0 0] again to the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 41 and if you could read at verse 14 Isaiah 41 verse 14 fear not you Jacob you men of Israel I am the one who helps you declares the Lord your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel behold I make of you a thrashing sledge new sharp and having teeth you will thrash the mountains and crush them and you shall make the hills like chaff and so on down to verse 17 when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst I the Lord will answer them I the God of Israel will not forsake them so on and one of the things that Isaiah is really brilliant at doing is making the believer just so aware of what they have because sometimes as Christians we lose sight of just the wonder the glory of what it really means to have the living and true God as our God and I see as a master of exalting God of really raising up to see something of his true majesty and glory and also to make us aware that this God who is the creator God the God who controls everything is also personally our God as well and is involved in everything about our lives and the God who is watching over us and the God who has great purposes for us in the Bible shows us very clearly of how important the church is to God sometimes we forget that and particularly in a day where we're living where we're seeing the church in many areas of this world being really hammered and God's people being persecuted and marginalized and facing all kinds of difficulties and troubles and so it's very easy sometimes to think that the church has had it but it hasn't because God loves the church in fact in the

New Testament and yes in the old we see that the church is the bride the church is precious to the Lord and the church is his portion in this world and the church is what and who he's going to take with him to glory forever so one of the things Isaiah is so good at doing is making us realize just what we have by belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ and our text opens with one of the many fear knots that we find dotted throughout the Bible and indeed a great favorite of Isaiah he's always using this fear knot and so often we've highlighted that when the Lord says to us to fear knot he always gives us a reason why we shouldn't fear because as we know it's of no use to say to somebody who is full of fear full of anxiety full of worry oh don't worry it actually can be quite annoying when people say that when you're riddled with fear but the Lord when he says don't fear always gives us reasons why we shouldn't fear back in verse 10 he's again says fear not and then having said that goes on to give this beautiful list for I'm with you be not dismayed I am your God it's just like when the disciples remember the night they were crossing on the on the water and they saw this apparition walking on the water towards them and they cried out in fear as probably you and I would as well if we saw that and Jesus spoke to them and he said be of good cheer do not be afraid why it is I and so this is what we find the Lord so often doing he's telling us not to be afraid and he gives us the reason why and this idea that we have say for in verse 10 where he says I will strengthen you I will help you the idea there is where he says I will help you is he's saying I have helped you in the past

I am actually involved whether you're aware of it or not of helping you right now and I will continue to help you in the future so that this word this idea of I will help you is a helping that governs our past is involved in our present and is there for our future and it's often good for us to be able to look back and realize at times when God in the past has helped us and you'll find that's a very biblical way of encouraging ourselves in the Lord it's what David did when he went out to fight Goliath and he wouldn't put on the armor he tried Saul's armor it was far too big for him and he just said no I'm just going out like this and they said to him you can't and he said well and he told them how God had helped him kill a lion and kill a bear that had come and had pinched lambs that he was looking after and he said if the Lord who helped me delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear he's able to deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine also so that was David thinking he encouraged himself we're told he often did that he encouraged himself in the Lord and one of the ways we encourage ourselves in the Lord is looking back and seeing things that God did for us in the past even in the difficult times anyway we find here that the Lord is addressing his people and he's addressing Israel and he's addressing you and me today and he says fear not you worm Jacob now we can understand Jacob very well and Israel because we know the history of Jacob and how Jacob's name was changed to Israel but the description that is given of God's people here is quite a strange description because he calls you worm Jacob and you can't get much lower than a worm a worm which is crawling about under the ground a worm which has been crushed a wriggly worm you know if you if you called somebody I hear nothing but a worm I think they'd be quite offended because it's about as an offensive

I think as you could call somebody it really belittling a worm I mean did you just call me a worm and there's something about I know sometimes a worm is a kind of strange fascination for little children but a worm is something a lot of people just have a sense of disgust about and they just they don't like worms and yet that's what the Lord is calling his people here and you know it is a picture of really of the Christian because one of the things that the Christian is and we'll see this in a moment is that they are in many ways the lowest of the low even although they have all the riches of Christ they are heirs and joint heirs with Christ they have the indwelling of the spirit they have innumerable blessings and yet in many ways they are the lowest of the low the world will look on the

Christian as a worm because the world very often their attitude to a person changes when a person becomes a Christian not always but with some people that's what happens but it's very interesting that it's not just the believer who is termed a worm but even the great head of the church the Lord Jesus Christ we just sang about that in Psalm 22 that prophetic Psalm about his death his crucifixion about what he had to bear I am no man but a worm this is speaking above the Lord Jesus Christ so that even Jesus in the Bible in our nature is termed a worm with regard to where he had to go and with regard to what he had to do because we've got to remember that he who thought of no robbery to be equal with God he made himself of no reputation he made himself nothing he became an utter nobody in this world in order to make us all become a somebody in him it's incredible so Jesus couldn't have gone it would be impossible for him to have gone any lower down the ladder of lowness than he did in order to bring about our salvation so Jesus Christ the second person of the Godhead is termed in scripture in his role as our savior in all that he had to do and to suffer and the way he was made just a nothing in the eyes of people a worm and so it is for his church as well but you know this is this is the way of grace and it's quite an it's quite an amazing thing though the believer is here termed a worm she is going to see what she's going to do we're told she is going to thrash the mountains and crush them and you will make the hills like chaff so that's quite amazing now one of the things that you know about hills and mountains is that they're immovable and I believe that in this context it is talking about the immovable objects and the challenges and the difficulties that are facing God's people now as we say one of the things that if you went away for years and years and years and you came back you might see quite a lot of changes but the Uig Hills and the Harris Hills and the Lochs Hills they would be just the same the hills are always there they're they're the kind of the immovable objects but here we're told that the hills that they're going to be thrashed you will thrash the mountains and crush them and you will make the hills like chaff so that's quite an amazing promise and it just shows that in God's hand the people who are nobodies are going to become somebodies in Jesus Christ and that is such an encouragement to us because maybe today you feel you feel overwhelmed by the mountains that are in your life mountains of trouble mountains of lust mountains of temptation you may feel that you're being overcome you say to yourself I don't know what's going to happen to me I can't see a way forward I just feel so helpless in the face of everything I have to face and as a Christian

[12:13] I don't feel I'm going anywhere in fact if I feel I'm going anywhere it's downwards and backwards and yet here is this glorious promise and the Lord saying yeah there are all these mountains and there are these hills and there are these things that you feel are going to crush you and overwhelm you and they would were it not for the fact that I am with you fear not I am with you I will help you I will strengthen you and this is what in my hand you are going to be able to do even although today you may not feel like it so we see this great and glorious promise and then it says in verse 17 when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst I the Lord will answer them I the God of Israel will not forsake them and here of course we have a picture of people who are at the very end of the resources who are really really needy and the word needy here comes from the word afflicted so here are people who have all kinds of problems whether they're physical or whether they're mental or whether they're emotional or social or spiritual every kind of problem and they feel that they're dying from lack of water as you and I know that one of the things we depend upon in life is water and I've never known real thirst and I've said it before I remember I used to do back in the day I used to do a lot of hill walking and such like and I remember this really good spell in summer and being away camping overnight and I know maybe you shouldn't drink out of streams but I often did I just often drank out of streams and I only took a little water with me and I thought there'd be I would find water no problem well I couldn't find water the next day for hours it had been a hot spell and one or two of the streams which I thought would be there there was just nothing and the one thing I do remember is that my thinking was consumed with the thought of water just get I need to get I need my throat had become so dry my tongue everything and I couldn't think of anything and the whole wide world but just getting a little water now that was only for a large part of the day which is not real thirst because there are some people who know what real thirst is but here are people who are as it were at the very end of the resources they're in desperation and tying in with the poor with the needy with the worm we have here a great description of the Christian because that's the place we come to when we come to receive Jesus Christ do you know a person will never become a Christian as long as they feel in total control of their lives they feel that they are somebody that like the church in Laodicea said we have need of nothing be very very very hard for somebody like that who feels that they don't really need anything to come to Jesus it's when we feel we have nothing it's kind of when we've come to the the end of our own resources and we have to go to the Lord and say Lord I'm beat you know I can't do this

I can't do life anymore and it doesn't matter in what way it has come like that for you but that's where you're at that's a person who is only a step away from becoming a Christian the rich young ruler who came to to to Jesus and he said what must I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said to him about the commandments oh I said yeah kept them all I know them all kept them all and you could almost see Jesus shaking his head and he said I'll sell all that you have and come follow me and he went away sorrowful because he was very rich and the problem it's not that the riches are a problem in life it is the dependence upon riches and this young man who was so self-righteous so full of his own goodness in this world he was so far removed from Jesus however nice however decent a person he was we've got to come to this place of being poor and needy it's just like the prodigal remember the prodigal when he went away into the far country and oh he had everything for a while he had loads of friends he had loads of money he had fame he had fortune popularity you name it but then it all ran out everything ran out not just his money but his popularity his friends everybody the man who had everything soon was a man who had nothing and it tells us he began to be in want and that's exactly what the same description that we have here of being in want of being in want of being in absolute need in desperation and that's that's sort of say this is a place that that we have to come to poverty of spirit as we are told is one of the definitions of the christian remember in in matthew and the beatitudes blessed are the poor in spirit says jesus for there's just the kingdom of god blessed are the poor in spirit and that's where we've got to come down to this place and say lord i have nothing and until we reach that point you know we actually don't see the real point in being a christian because we don't feel the need of being saved you see what's happened to us at the very beginning because of adam and eve's fall we inherited what they became and we're told if you remember a catechism that although we had were made originally in the image of god and knowledge in righteousness and in holiness yet whenever they fell it was like that image was shattered and we're told that there is a want or a lack of original righteousness that we originally had that god made us with as we were made an image in an image of himself reflecting his knowledge his righteousness his holiness bam it's all gone and so there's this lack and that's what this poverty of spirit is is coming to discover hey i i'm not right before god but there's not only this lack of original righteousness we're also told there's the corruption corruption of our whole nature wow that takes us back to the worm because very often when we think of corruption we think of worms and that's how we are we don't like to think that's why a lot of

people are offended in church and they go to church i don't need to be told that you go home or go out and people say what what was the sermon about today i was told there was a worm and i was corrupt through and through people's fault i don't need to hear that but this is this is actually what the lord is saying but he's saying it in order to help us and you remember the prodigal when he came to this state of utter want or lack what did he do i said he began to think and for the first time for a long time he began to think right and he said you know there's only one place i can go it's not going to be easy but there's only one place in this whole world that i can go i've got to go home i've got to get up i've got to arise i've got to go to my father despite all i've done it's not going to be easy but i've got to do it and that's what he did but when he was a long way off remember his father saw his father ran out and met him and so we have this this great picture of of the need and the only place that this need can be dealt with we've got to go home to our spiritual home to our father in heaven who has made the provision for us in jesus christ and you know what he says see you're void of original righteousness but you know what i'll do you come to me and i will clothe you in the righteousness of my son so that when i look at you i'm going to look at you through my son yes you're full of sin but you know what i'm going to do i'm going to forgive all your sin yeah all of them to be awful if the lord would say you know i can only forgive some of them i can only forgive a percentage no it's all the blood of jesus christ cleanses from all sin and so we find here that what i love here is when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst i the lord will answer them i the god of israel will not forsake them and what is he going to do i will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys i will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water see what's going to happen the lord is going to answer he's going to answer when we least expect it and he's going to answer in ways we don't expect and what i love about this is that it's when we're poor and you know there are times like the rich young ruler the rich young ruler ran to jesus full of his own importance and he thought he was decent and actually jesus didn't really have anything for him but you know we can go to the other end of the scale and we can sometimes feel i don't know if i can go to the lord i just feel so unclean as a as a christian i just i'm so far removed from where i should be lord won't take me lord won't listen to me lord's going to say to me why are you coming to me after the way you've been and lived no he doesn't deal like that here are the people and they're here's the worm here they are dry and parched and they're empty and they're they're so low doesn't tell us they might be low because of their sin and there's no doubt that the exile was brought about by their sin and the lord of course makes these glorious promises about how the exile is going to come

to an end despite what they've been he's going to take them back restore their land restore their fortunes and god's saying the same to you and to me don't ever keep away from god because of your sin in fact it's the very reverse just go to god because of your sin like the prodigal going home and you have to be honest and say lord i've messed up and i'm continuing to mess up and i'm not what i should be and not what i want to be and the lord is going to answer and he's going to answer in ways beyond you ever imagined and he's going to do far more for you than you ever thought possible because that's what we find what what he's saying to us you see that that's in the most unlikely places in the most unlikely time i'll open rivers on the bare heights fountains in the midst of the valley i will make the wilderness a pool of water in the dry land springs of water and in the middle east i mean we we can have our periods after maybe if we have a really good spell of weather sometimes you know how even the moor can get fairly dry but our dryness is nothing like the dryness in the middle east where it can be so arid and so barren and so bare and yet the lord is saying you know i'm going to turn it all into springs there's going to be an abundance of refreshing for you so wherever you are today if you're here as an unbeliever if you're not committed to the lord maybe you're saying to yourself will the lord accept me yes why do i say that because that's what he says in his word him or her that comes to me i will in no wise cast out i will never turn away somebody who genuinely comes to me and if you are a believer but you're saying to yourself i don't know if i can come to the lord right now i'm following the lord but things haven't been too good of late this is a time to come and he doesn't deal with us according to our sin but he deals in his great abundant love and mercy so may we be encouraged from the words that we have here let us pray oh lord our gracious god we give thanks again for the marvel of your word and of how you are the god who turns darkness into light turns the dry land into springs the lord who does the most amazing amazing things for his people and we pray that we may know your amazing love your amazing grace your amazing mercy your amazing peace within our own hearts lord protect us from all the enemies that are out to destroy us and even protect us from ourselves and guide us in the way of truth we pray to bless the cup of tea coffee in the hall laughter and take everybody home safely we pray and forgive us all our sin in jesus name amen our concluding psalm is from the scottish psalter and it's psalm 143 psalm 143 and it's the second version of the psalm so on page 439 and we're going to sing from verse 6 to verse 10 the tune is heber for these four stanzas lo i do stretch my hands to thee my help alone for thou well understands all my complaint and moan you know it's wonderful when you when you read the read that that the lord

understands all his complaints all his moans my thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee as thirsty ground requires with rain refreshed to be lord let my prayer prevail to answer it make speed for lo my spirit doth fail hide not thy face in need lest i be like to those that do in darkness sit or him that downward goes into the dreadful pit and so on verses 6 to 10 or psalm 143 lo i do stretch my hands to thee my help alone for thou well understand all my complaint and moan my my thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee as thirsty ground requires with rain refreshed to be lord let my prayer prevail to pray for thee

[29 : 44] To answer it makes me For though my strength of fear I've not thy face in me Lest I be like to those That do in darkness sin Heart in love and work goes Into the dreadfulness Because I trust in thee O Lord cause me to hear Thy loving kindness we When morning doth appear

Cause me to know the way Where in my path should be For while my soul on high I do lift up to thee Of my fierce enemy In safety to be guide Because I'm free to lead Lord that thou art thou art thou Teach me to know the Lord Teach me thy righteousness Christ could lead me to

The land of our brightness Now may the grace, mercy, and peace Of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Rest and abide upon each one of you Now and forevermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen