

⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.

God will not forget you

- I. Trust in His saving presence
- II. Trust in His miraculous deliverance

Fellow citizens of the eternal kingdom,

For most of us the word home brings feelings of warmth and happiness. Home is where we were safe as children. Home is where we were accepted for who we are. Home is the place we are always welcome. I pray that your home life was like this. If it wasn't, you know the importance of having a happy home.

I think of the soldiers moving closer to their rotation out of Iraq, Pakistan, or Afghanistan. Their thoughts begin to focus more and more on the loved ones who are waiting for their return. Their longing is more and more for the comfort that they associate with their homes. They are anxious for that place where they will be safe and free from the threat of enemy fire and destruction. They look forward with anticipation for the embraces, the hugs and kisses and the moments of looking at faces that are only a memory at this time.

The big question in the minds of those soldiers is whether they will be able to realize their hope of reaching home. They are aware that at any time a bullet, a bomb, or a grenade may keep that from happening.

The bible refers to us as people who are on our way home. We are pilgrims each day moving closer to that goal of reaching our heavenly home. Heaven is described as a place of splendor. It is referred to as a place of peace, a place where there is no more sorrow, no more death, where the little child and the wild predators will play together in safety.

The question is whether you will get there. There are so many things in our lives that are uncertain. We have seen the truth of this in the last 12 months. People who were financially comfortable lost much of what they had worked so hard for. People who had worked at the same company for their whole working life were let go. A young man eagerly anticipating his marriage to his fiancé finds himself anticipating attending her funeral instead. The list could go on and on.

There is no question that we are living in a changing world. Neither is there any question that all of us have our future held in the hand of God. If or when our lives begin to unravel, will God remember us? Will He know our circumstances? Will He see to it that we will arrive at our destination of heaven or will we be forgotten in the shuffle of this world's pain and problems? The answer is that GOD WILL NOT FORGET YOU.

I. Trust in His saving presence

The land of Judah had been reduced to a wasteland. The farms and vineyards had been untended and turned wild. The irrigation canals had been stopped up and the wells had been filled with dirt. The land had become a barren wilderness.

We can find ourselves in situations like this in our lives just as the people of Judah did. How important it is for us to have a grasp of the bigger picture. In these words from the prophet Isaiah the Holy Spirit helps us to keep our eyes on our homeward journey. He wants us to live in anticipation of what we have to look forward to and the certainty that we are going to arrive there safely. God did not forget Israel and He does not forget us.

Our text begins, **say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."** Don't be afraid! Why should you not have fearful hearts? Isaiah answers, **Your God will come.** The first part of Isaiah's prophecy is loaded with bad news. It speaks of the judgments of God. Chapter 34 contains harsh words for those who are not God's people and this is contrasted here with encouraging words for those who are God's people.

God knows that there will be times in your lives when you will become weak, fearful, timid, anxious or even angry. The inclination of our hearts under such circumstances is to dwell on the worse case alternatives, isn't it!

Think about the remnant coming back from the Babylonian captivity. Their land lay in ruins. Could they rebuild and get it productive again in their lifetime? How would they survive during the months and years ahead? How many times have refugees come back to their homes after war in recent years only to find ruins waiting for them? Perhaps there have been times when you have come home to illness and even death of a loved one.

Just at these times the Lord wants you to hear His message. You can be strong. There is no need to fear. At the right time and in the best way God will fulfill his promises to rule the world in your very best interest. Your God is always with you.

Most of you have seen the picture of foot prints in the sand. The question to God was, "Why did you stop walking with me at just those times which were the most difficult?" God's answer was that when the two sets of foot prints stopped and only one set continued at tough times, it was not because He had abandoned you but "that is when He was carrying you!"

The truth is that God had us in His heart long before we were born into this world. He already knew us before the creation of the world. He already planned our salvation at that time. He knew you personally by your name. When He sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world through the virgin birth He was looking out for you. He was carrying your needs in His heart when He abandoned His one and only Son, Jesus to the suffering of crucifixion and the agonies of hell.

These are the historical facts of your redemption. There is no pill you can take or ointment you can rub on your heart or your head to remove the anguish of a guilty conscience. Your sins have offended your holy God. Left to yourself you would be lost forever. But God has loved you with an everlasting love – from eternity to eternity. He provided the perfect cure for your sins. He sent Jesus to live as your substitute who fulfilled the perfect standard of the law and removed the guilt of the sins you committed by carrying them to the cross. This is why God has declared you pure and holy in His sight.

God also keeps you in this grace. The only reason believers come to doubt this is because they allow injury and illness, financial setbacks and the hostility at the hands of people around them to blur their focus on Jesus. In the midst of such times of stress and anxiety the father of lies tries to convince us that God doesn't care about us. He is too busy keeping the universe running. How can He be concerned about you? You are only a speck on the orb of the earth? This is not true. God never forgets about you. He always has His angels watching over you. He has called you to live in His promises.

I. Trust in His miraculous deliverance

What about when we come into judgment? That day will most certainly come! The text says, ***your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.*** This sounds pretty awesome, doesn't it? God's vengeance is not a trifling matter. Just reflect back on what happened when He judged the world of Noah's day. Every man, woman and child who was not a believer went down in the flood. Only eight people survived that judgment in the ark. If this is how clean the broom of God's judgment sweeps, then how can we hope to survive the sickle of His judgment?

Remember this. God is not a piker. He keeps His Word of promise. You and I will survive the same way Noah did. God has provided an ark for us in the person of Jesus. To live in faith in Jesus is to live in spiritual safety now and in the Day of Judgment. The text says, ***He will come to save you.***

Our text concludes with these words, ***then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.*** Both of these verses begin with the word, *then*. It is a reference first of all to the coming of the Messiah. This would be a time of dramatic miracles. Jesus had told the people of His day that if they didn't believe in Him because of what He was teaching them, they should at least have believed Him because of the miracles He did.

For us in whom the Spirit of God has planted faith, the miracles are not insignificant. They testify to the fact that Jesus is God. But it is the last element that is the most important. Jesus is God our Savior. From this truth flow energetic and joyous responses to our salvation.

The prophet pictures this in terms of water in the desert. Without water the countryside is dead and barren, parched and desolate. Wherever water is available, there is lush growth. Imagine what it meant for the Israelites to see water gush forth in the wilderness, streams in the desert, the burning sand becoming a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.

This is not just a picture of Israel. It is also a picture of you. God wants you to know this so that the cares of this life don't overwhelm you. He wants you to know this so that you do not give up the struggle of faith in Jesus. He wants you to trust His promises and live victoriously in these promises. He wants you to keep looking forward to the miraculous deliverance He has in store for you when He comes again. This is not a mirage shimmering on the horizon. The glory He has in store for you is real. God does not forget His people! Amen.