

encouragement and hope to His people. If they truly believed and followed Him, He would use His power to deliver them from their captivity and would protect and provide for them. Note the assurance and promises given by the LORD:

a. God's assurance: They were His chosen servants (vv.8-9).

God Himself assured His people that they were His *chosen* servants. Note that God addressed the people as Israel, *my servant* and Jacob, *whom I have chosen*. He then called them the descendants of Abraham, *my friend* (v.8). These are titles of great honor. Consider what a privilege it is to be a servant of God, chosen by Him, and to be a descendant of Abraham, the friend of God Himself. God had always pursued a close relationship with the Israelites, even those of Isaiah's day, and offered them the privilege of knowing Him intimately. In fact, God has usually offered the privilege of knowing Him personally to both Jew and Gentile. But the human race has always chosen to reject His offer. Even though God had chosen the Israelites to be His very special servants, they had often proved unfaithful. Consequently, God was forced to continually discipline and punish them.

Here, it is God's purpose to give His people great assurance. Though God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish them, the LORD would one day gather them from the ends of the earth. They were His servants, chosen by Him; therefore, He would not forget them in their hour of trial. He would not reject them (v.9). He would set them free from the Babylonian captivity so they could return to the promised land.

b. God's promise to protect His people (vv.10-16).

God assured His people that He would protect them in the here and now, in the present distress they were experiencing. No doubt God's promise of freeing His people from the coming captivity was very encouraging, especially to the true believers who were to endure the Babylonian captivity. But they needed far more than just a distant, future hope of deliverance. Righteous believers needed to know that God was with them day by day in their present painful circumstances. So God met their need and gave them a most wonderful promise: whether in the present or in the future and in whatever circumstances, God's people were not to fear. Three reasons are given why righteous believers should not be anxious, afraid.

First, God's people were not to fear because He Himself would be with them. He would strengthen and help them and uphold them with His right hand—His righteous, victorious hand. God's promise to be with His people applies to all righteous believers of all generations. Even in the very worst times believers are not to be dismayed or frightened by the oppression of any enemy. Even if the enemy seems much

stronger and the believers feel extremely weak, the LORD promises to strengthen His people. Even when believers fall and collapse before the enemy, the LORD will uphold them with His right hand, a hand of righteousness and justice (2 Ti.4:18).

- The LORD will shame and confuse all who oppose His people; their enemies will perish by the LORD's victorious, righteous hand (v.11).
- The Lord will totally eliminate all the enemies who contend with or wage war against His people (v.12).

Second, God's people were not to fear because He would hold their right hands and help them as they faced their enemies (v.13). Note the close relationship being stressed here: the LORD tells righteous believers that He is "your God" and that He will take "hold of your right hand." He will "help you." Meditating upon this promise should give enormous encouragement to believers who are facing oppression and hardships.

Third, God's people were not to fear because He was their Redeemer (v.14). *Redeemer* here refers to the kinsman redeemer (*goel*), who in ancient history was the family protector. The redeemer was a person who saved or rescued a family member who was suffering or distressed due to financial trouble, the death of a spouse, loss of property, or some other heavy burden (see DEEPER STUDY #1—Ru.2:20 for more discussion). In the present Scripture, the LORD calls Himself the Redeemer, the family protector of His people. As their Redeemer, He promises to help them. The implication for the Israelites was that He would deliver them from their captivity. Note also the other title the LORD claims for Himself: the Holy One of Israel (His people). As the Holy One, He is distinct, completely set apart from all other creatures by His power, knowledge, and understanding. Thus, He is able to completely fulfill His purpose in the lives of His people despite their hardships or difficult circumstances. Note that He refers to His people as *worms*, which simply means that they are weak and helpless. Though they are too weak to help themselves, they are not to fear the enemies who oppress them, for God is their Redeemer. And as their Redeemer, God will do two things for His people:

- The Lord will empower them to defeat their enemies (v.15). He will make them like a threshing sledge with sharp teeth. They will thresh their enemies and reduce them to chaff, and the enemies will be blown away as if by a strong wind (vv.15-16).
- The Lord will give them hearts that rejoice and glory in Him (v.16).

c. God's promise to provide for His people as they suffered in exile or returned from captivity (vv.17-20).

God assured His people that He would provide for them. This specific promise of God refers to God's