**Scripture:** Isaiah 50:4-11

**Sermon:** With God in Adversity.

**Text:** Isaiah 50:7—"For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded".

**Proposition:** People frequently think that God has deserted them, and others think that they have been sinful, when adversity befalls them; and often the adversity is their own fault. When people remain loyal to God as best they can at all times they find that he does help them in many ways, so that in confidence and courage they can feel sustained by him in all circumstances.

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**Dates and places used:**

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Introduction:

1. Today is Race Relations day. Many churches of several denominations observe it by thinking about ways in which people of differing races should act toward each other. Often the thought is based around the fact that it is all too common for persons of a minority race in a given situation to be oppressed and discriminated against because of their color or race. The consideration of this fact in a Christian service of worship is usually coupled with the stating of some ways to bring about greater Christian brotherhood between peoples of the various races. We'll do more of that next week, when we begin what is called "Brotherhood Week". But today we are going to spend more of our time on the thought of the adversity which is faced by minority groups to a large extent, but to some extent by others too. We want to think of the Christian outlook, of course, toward adversity; for this is a Christian service of worship.

2. A story is told of a mild little man who returned from his wife's funeral on a windy, stormy day. He had just reached home when a tile was
blown from the roof and hit him on the head. "My", he exclaimed, "she cer-
tainly got to heaven fast!" (C. Kennedy as in Quote, 1/23/66, p. 18)

3. Often when we feel like we are hit on the head by something we didn't choose, or trampled down, or oppressed, or caused to suffer, we tend to blame it on God, as the meek little man did the falling tile on his wife. Or, to put it another way,

I. People frequently think that God has deserted them when adversity befalls them.

1. The Scripture that we read is part of a figure of speech, a parallel, a parable, in which Isaiah, like the other prophets Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, describes the relationship between God and his people as a marriage. He, like the other prophets, is concerned with the breach which he thinks has come between God and the people. Israel has been defeated in war, and its leaders are in exile and slavery. It was obvious that God and as the husband and the covenant nation Israel as the people were in fact separated. However,
I hope you are feeling better. I learned from your teletype that you are feeling better. I am pleased to hear you are better. I trust you will continue to improve. It is good to hear you are doing well.

If you need anything, please let me know.

I look forward to seeing you soon.
there was no proof of a divorce. The prophet was asking why there was no divorce if there was separation? You need to remember that in ancient Israel, to whom this book was written, the man could divorce his wife without her consent. She was then free to marry another man; but she could never remarry nor return to her former husband, the one who divorced her. This was sometimes the reason why the woman would leave before the divorce bill or parchment or paper was handed her; so that a separation which might perhaps in the future be mended would take place, instead of a divorce. This was the situation the prophet Isaiah saw in its relationship to God. Like a sinful wife, Israel had left God on a separation basis. God had not divorced Israel, but it was Israel's own doing which had brought the separation. The separation had resulted in slavery, poverty, suffering and cruelty in the people of Israel. They tended to blame God, as the separated wife would tend to blame her husband. The fact was, however, Isaiah says, that they had sinned, and in shame had left before a divorce. God, like a forgiving husband, was ever ready to take them back.
2. The parallelism carries through today. We often blame our misfortunes on others: the government, the communists, the high cost of living, dishonest business men, incompetent medics, cowardly clergymen, and so on. It is so much easier to blame others than to take the blame ourselves. Yet, most of our troubles of consequence perhaps could be laid to our own door. We have so many things that we do wrong on purpose, and each one of us does. When the inevitable results show up, though, we tend to blame other people.

3. Someone wrote that the hostess gown was designed to keep you from running down the wrong person! Often we are running down the wrong people when we blame others for our mistakes. Certainly we are when we blame God, as we often do. So often we ask why God has caused us to suffer, or be grieved, or allowed us to fail in an endeavor; when the truth frequently is that lack of diligence, hostile attitudes, failure to prepare properly for an event, and other failures of our own are the responsible things.

4. When it is not we ourselves
who are experiencing the misfortunes, but someone else, then we usually are quick to point out that it is their own fault. In the southern part of our country, my native region, it is most frequently the case that people of the favored white race blame those of the colored, or negro, race for their misfortunes. They say that these poor people are lazy, unsanitary, immoral, etc. Unwilling to accept the long history of oppression which the whites have heaped upon the negro, for reasons of profit and service, they cover up their guilt by blaming the minority group's misfortunes on what are actually symptoms and results which happen to the colored folks can't help. Instead of blaming or regretting too much the past, perhaps an active pro-
gram of education for the youngsters, health clinics for all age groups, full and fair treatment as human beings of all ages, would be much better as a technique at lessening the adversity of the negro people in the south. This, of course, is the objective of those who are concerned about the pro-

5. We don't have to visit, actually
I have lived in other places where we or in imagination, far away places to find people whom we tend to blame for their misfortunes. Here in our valley (the San Luis Valley of Colorado) are conditions among some of the folks of Spanish ancestry which are as poverty-stricken as any you'll find in the U. S. I've heard lots of our well-to-do Anglo Protestant people say, in effect, that these people are fully to blame for their lot. They are lazy, they are content to live on relief, whether the Aid to Dependent Children or the Old Age Pension funds which come to various ones of their families, etc.

Of course, there is some truth to this. But perhaps some history of exploitation and oppression of these people in the picture, too. When fault is assessed -- beginning with the old Spanish conquests and continuing through the Anglo settlements even to our own day. Check your history, look around, and you'll find this is pretty close to the situation.

6. To assess blame for the past, whether in the south or in the valley, does little good, except perhaps as a basis of knowledge from which to seek ways of bettering the situations.
The thing place to start bettering things may well be by dropping the fault-finding attitude and adapting ones of Christian forgiveness and helpfulness. We as Church people can lead out in doing this.

7. Certainly we don't blame God for the conditions of adversity in which our negro or spanish friends find themselves; nor for the grievous and hurtful things which happen to us. God has not deserted anyone. But in letting humans have the freedom to work out their own affairs, he has allowed them to mess up greatly in their performance, so very often. Don't blame God. He has not deserted mankind; but the reverse. Instead,

II. When people remain loyal to God as best they can at all times, they find that he does help them, in many ways.

1. A new father was away from home and received his glad tidings in a telegram:

"Hazel gave birth to a little girl this morning; both doing well."

And on the message there was a sticker reading: "When you want a boy call
Isaiah 50:4-11

Western Union". (from Laugh Parade, as in Quote, 1/23/66, p. 16).

Well, God does not always give quite that positive assurance of satisfying our whim so specifically. But to those who remain loyal to him under all circumstances he is helpful, even though the suffering and other adversities which they experience may not be removed.

3. As we live, it seems that the world presents to us an immense panorama of futility. We respond by what is really a distrust in God's present effective workings. Things are so bewildering that we just simply cannot see God working in them. Then it is that we need to look back into history. Things in the past have happened, and they are solid. They won't change. As we look back, we see the exiled Israelites of Isaiah's time. Many of them took up the religious and social practices of the Babylonians among whom they were forced to live. But others held fast to their faith in the one God. It was these who remained loyal who bequeathed to history such great teachings as those in the book
of Isaiah. With no living symbol of their faith nearby, such as their beloved temple in Jerusalem, they created synagogues, which have been copied so that the Jew everywhere today finds a local place to worship and which practice Christians have copied with our many local places of worship. The ancient exiled Jews carried on other practices too, such as regular worship, circumcision, religious education.

4. America was settled by Europeans who were determined that they would be true to God, as they understood his revelation in Christ. This is the heritage of the New England colonies at least. A terrified, oppressed religious minority from England fled to this country. Many of them died early and horrible deaths. But their determination to find a place where a person could worship according to his conscience eventually resulted in a land where that has been more possible than ever before in history. God truly was with those who remained loyal to him even within adversity.

5. In more recent times, we are
familiar with the history of Nazism in Germany and Europe. Few Germans who considered themselves Christian recognized the almost-demonic nature of Nazism until it was too late. Then by the thousands Christians were among those who were ruthlessly put to death when they dared oppose the state. One of the biggest influences on Christian theology even today is that of a German preacher, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died because of his active participation in the German resistance movement. His resistance to that which he considered wrong did not end that wrong during his lifetime (though it contributed to it later). It did add to our understanding that we must be loyal to what we think right, even to the point of forceful resistance to wrong-doers, if we are to be true to our God.

6. All this from history should encourage us perhaps not to expect instant blessings and results, instant problem solving, because of our loyalty to God. We are assured, though, by all this that loyalty to God does bring help and value eventually, which is worth far
It appears the image contains a document page with text, but due to the quality of the image, the text is not clearly legible. It seems to be discussing a project or a policy, possibly related to Germany and conditions in the country, but the specifics are not discernible from the image provided.
more than the sufferings we must take for a while. Such a view gives meaning to life, even to its adversities.

7. When you look at it this way, courage and strength to continue in faithfulness and loyalty to God and his righteousness are possible. As Martin Luther wrote in that great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress":

"Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever".

Conclusion:
1. With this spirit it is possible to say with ancient Isaiah, when things get bad:

"For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded". We might add, "and I will not be confused nor traitorous either".
in the women's suffrage movement, we must take
for a struggle. Such a view given moment.

to live, even to the sacrifice.

So when you look at life's
attentive to continuing to

independence, and I want to say my

great.

"A Mighty Fortress"

"Let all the world his praise:

"The Word from above already

"Come, Lord, help us

The Reformation is forever

Conclusion:

If all the spiritual

"For the Lord God help us, we know

"I have not been comforted",

"But who can find a soul to

"The door of the church is open.

"EA 1942-11"