

My Anchor

From the series, *Anchored*

Isaiah 41:10

By Dr. David H. McKinley

When you see a logo or image, what does it say to you? Known as a “brand,” it is a way of identifying something, whether it be in the corporate or business world. Our church has a brand to identify us within this community. It is seen on our signs and letterhead; it’s viewed on our website and app, even on our coffee cups. I pray when people see it, it doesn’t just identify us as a church, but there is an association of credibility for who we are and what we do.

Although Warren has a brand, we are not a corporation. We’re not even an organization as such; we’re an organism. We’re a living thing—the body of Christ. One of the reasons we’ve always used the colors green and black is because it demonstrates the life God brings to a world of darkness. And we want to be life and light in a world of darkness.

There are several things our “W” branding stands for: worshipers, witnesses, workers, warriors, etc. I could go down the list further concerning the symbolism of our brand. But for us, it’s not about branding; it’s about a bond—a sense of belonging. It’s something that unifies us around who we are because of what we believe.

While we have brands all around us—and it’s true of other churches all around the world—it was not true in the first century church. They didn’t have brands as we know them today. One of the reasons is because many of them didn’t have a building and certainly not letterhead, a website, or any of those things. However, just because our modern world uses this term, *branding*, it does not mean the early, first century Christians did not have symbols of belonging and symbols that expressed their faith.

One of the most significant symbols in ancient history—still carried forward even through modern hymnology—was the anchor. The anchor was the emblem in the ancient world of a commonality of faith. The anchor was etched in stones, found in catacombs, and seen in a variety of places. Certainly it was used because of Jesus’ ministry, and the church was built upon the calling of disciples, many of whom were fishermen. They were people who had come from a nautical world. So the anchor symbol was often used as their brand—the bond for the first century church—because it was something that expressed the nature of faith. It was something that gave security. It was something that assured strength, perseverance, and steadfastness while symbolizing hope.

The anchor was also a covert symbol. Many times, due to the resistance and persistence of the government to find, attack, and kill Christians, they didn't use the cross—something we think about today as being the symbol of Christianity. However, the cross was embedded in the anchor and served as a reminder of what the cross does. It gives us confidence and security.

We've called this series of messages, *Anchored*. I love what one Bible commentator said:

"Anchors in the Bible aren't just maritime devices; they're tangible symbols of the unchanging nature of God's Word. In the storms of life, when doubt and fear threaten to capsize us, the promises of God serve as a steadfast anchor, grounding us in His eternal truth."

And so during these weeks, we've had all four of our pastors swap out to come and bring hope and encouragement, and I trust you've received that.

Today I want to talk about the one thing that has been the anchor in my life. It is a single verse. If you walk in my office—just a few feet from where I'm standing now—you would find this verse displayed in my office—not just in one place, but in at least three places. If you pick up my preaching and study Bibles through the years, you would find this passage highlighted. If you read my journal—you couldn't, because my handwriting is so illegible—you would find it's reference and text repeatedly written there because of what it means to me. And as you look just outside that door, you'd find I never enter this Worship Center on a Sunday morning without walking under and standing upon its truth.

The verse of Scripture I want to identify today as my anchor is Isaiah 41:10. I pray as we read it today, it will become an anchor in your life as well:

"Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Does anybody know who the Bible says is seated at the right hand of the Father? Jesus Christ. And so, there's even—as though it were—the beauty of a prophecy embedded within this promise. God's strength in our lives comes through the relationship we have with Him through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The background of this text of Scripture is one, like many others in the Bible, of crisis and conflict. Years had gone by in the nation of Israel. And because of their rebellion and the decay of their spiritual life and condition, they had experienced conflict, catastrophe, and dispersion. They were

victims—as though it were—living in a hostile world, and yet they were victims of their own sin and rebellion against God. As a result, the people of Israel were wondering, *“Has God forgotten His promises to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Are we no longer the people of covenant?”*

As time passed, their history had so eroded the spiritual heritage of the people, they wondered whether or not they had any sense of a future. And candidly, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are not pretty. Again and again, their sin and rebellion cause the judgment of God, the collapse of the people, and the shame they experience. But when you step into chapter 40 and toward the last part of the book of this prophet, Isaiah, you begin to move from judgment to comfort, from chaos to confidence because God begins to speak again to the hearts and lives of His people.

In Isaiah 41:10, God gives a positive, personal, and ultimately, a providential word to get them through difficult days. I love what Bible commentator Matthew Henry says:

“The scope of this verse is to silence the tears and encourage the faith of servants of God in their distresses—fear not the threats of the enemy nor doubt the promises of our God, fear not that you should perish in your afflictions or that the promises of your deliverance shall fail... though your enemies be very formidable, insolent and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them and triumph over them.” —Matthew Henry

I don’t know about you, but I need that affirmation in my own life today. While I’ve given you one verse in a very large book of 66 chapters—one of the vital books of the Bible—I’m thankful I can stand here today and say in accordance with the doctrinal truth of Romans 15:

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Are you *anxious* or are you *anchored*? Being anchored in life is based upon your relationship with God. In Isaiah 41:10, we are given three fundamental and foundational truths about God—His character, His nature—that I think are important for you and me if we’re going to be anchored in this adverse world in which we live. The first is simply this:

Foundation #1

God is Always Present

“Fear not, for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10a).

This is a theological truth built on biblical revelation. There's never a time, never a place, when God is not present. The Psalmist declared this in one of the most vivid ways I know in Psalm 139,

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you" (Psalm 139:7-12).

This is a very securing verse. There's never a place we go where God is not present. It's also a very severe warning, isn't it? Don't ever think you're going somewhere God is not going to see. We learned that lesson in our study of the book of Jonah. No matter what Jonah did, he couldn't outrun God! There is never a place to flee from God's presence. This truth is ultimately one of the greatest truths in the Bible—God's presence can always be known!

I haven't seen many of you for the better part of a month because I've been speaking on our other campuses. But there is a very familiar thing that happens to me as a pastor. I'll run into somebody who's a member of our church or worships at one of our other campuses, and I'll say, "I'm so glad to see you; I haven't seen you in forever!" And you know what they always say to me? "Oh, Pastor, I've been here!" I'm not trying to put them on a guilt trip. I'm not saying, "I haven't seen you," in the sense that maybe I haven't seen them with my eyes, but rather, "I haven't been in your presence."

As a Christian, we don't just know that God is present everywhere in the world in general, but we can also experience the personal reality of God's presence.

In Isaiah, God spoke a word of promise that ultimately frames the first Christmas:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14b).

Immanuel means *God with us*. God tells us that He sent His Son to earth, not that we might know the energy of God in general, but that we might know the person and personality of God through the visible reality and presence of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus became one of us who lived a sinless life, who took our sins and was put on a cross to shed His blood and to suffer the condemnation of our sin. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, He opened the door of heaven to allow unrighteous people to become righteous, and to go in through the work of His sacrifice. We can now live, knowing

the presence of God and the fellowship with God for which we were made and created. That's what God did in Christ. God wants us to know His presence!

This is the distinctive difference between Christianity and every other religion in the world. Every religion in the world affirms the existence of a god, but only Christianity confirms and expresses the presence of God that we can know Him, experience Him, and walk with Him. That's so important! Our natural default whenever we face a problem, crisis or pressure in life is fear.

It's natural in this world to be overwhelmed and consumed by fear—fear factors that constantly displace confidence and increase stress and anxiety. Fear is the great debilitator of the human soul, and nothing has greater impact than when you are living in fear. Fear constantly provokes and disrupts with a simple two-word question: "What if?" It's a question that produces doubt, suspicion, irritation, and uncertainty.

If we are driven by fear, our decisions, actions, and attitudes are shaped and driven by anxiety. Then when you add social media—this new medium in our culture that's constantly provoking and upsetting our lives—and lay it on top of our natural default to fear, it's almost as if we have an electrical current inside our bodies with all this voltage, and there's nowhere for it to go. We feel as if we're having an electrical meltdown on the inside!

Fear is such a destructive thing. But one of the greatest things in life when you are afraid and struggling is having someone come who loves you, cares about you, supports you, and says, "I'm here."

God says that to you: "Fear not, for I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10a).

Foundation #2

God is Absolute in Power

"Be not dismayed, for I am your God" (Isaiah 41:10b).

Literally, *be not dismayed* means *do not anxiously look about you* because I am your God.

In Exodus 3, we read one of the most dramatic stories in all the Bible. It's the story of the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery after 400 years of oppression by the Egyptians and under the control of the pharaohs. But during that time, God raised up a deliverer, a man by the name of Moses.

Moses was ultimately called of God to go to Egypt, assemble the people of Israel, and confront and say to Pharaoh, *"It's time to let them go."*

But Moses had a nervous breakdown. He said, *"I can't speak. I'm not good. Nobody's going to believe me. Why would anybody let me do this?"* But God said to Moses, *"I've seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, their taskmasters, and their suffering."* (See Exodus 3:7-8, 14). Then in Exodus 3:

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you"' (Exodus 3:14).

There is no more significant phrase in all the Bible than "I AM." That's how God reveals Himself, not that *He was* or *will be*, but *He is*! He is what He was, and He will always be what He is. He is the great I AM! Therefore, everything in life is to be seen in proportion and perspective of who God is and what God is like.

How do you see God in your life? The tragedy is that we let so many things eclipse our vision, our view, and our confidence in the Lord. Your shadow is confirmation that light has traveled 93 million miles unobstructed, only to be deprived of reaching the ground in the final few feet because you are obstructing its path. Think about it when you're standing in the sunshine. I'm blocking the lights right now. I have shadows from the lights... here... there.

The problem with shadows is this: they create fear. Nothing is worse than being in the dark without the ability to see clearly, and then to see a shadow. "What am I seeing? What am I looking at?" Then fear and uncertainty creep in. Likewise, too many of us turn away from looking to the brightness of who God is and we get consumed with our shadow. We chase our shadows on the ground, and we live in defeat and fear. We need to get our eyes off the shadow and put our eyes on the One who rules the world, and says, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14a).

"You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you" (Nehemiah 9:6).

The primary reason you need to open God's Word and study the Bible every day is because you need a renewed vision of who God is every morning. If you don't hear the voice of the true God, you will listen to and you will fail and fall to the power of the voices of false gods.

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh was the god of that age. All of culture was established and driven by Pharaoh. Today, the great god of this age is the god of technology, and in particular, the new emergence of AI (Artificial Intelligence). It is shaping our culture—looming and getting ever larger. It's being talked about everywhere, every day—a constant point of conversation. It's often a strong provoker of fear, because people are wondering, *"What's the impact of AI going to be in the job market? What's it going to do on a variety of different levels?"*

There has never been a global reality that has been more quickly accessible and accepted by people than the reality of AI. AI basically travels on two different tracks. One of them is the track called, *Generative AI*. Generative AI is content production, meaning you can open and link to AI and immediately ask for something. This creates a fear in educators. A student can simply type, "I need a research paper on blah... blah... blah," and the next thing you know, he or she has a 20-page research paper. It is also accessible on the job, anywhere.

Then there's another track, and it's Discriminative AI—data classification. Discriminative AI can utilize enormous amounts of stored information that is brought together to create statistics or whatever else is needed.

We are living in the looming reality that we're all going to be captive to AI. But remember this: no matter how big AI is or becomes, it will never exceed the power of the great I AM! There is no comparison with AI and the great I AM! Our faith is not in human achievement, human technology, human ability, or human capacity. Our faith is in the God who is above and beyond all these things.

I love the passage in the book of Daniel where three young men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were faced with a ultimatum. Nebuchadnezzar, who was the god of Babylon in that day, erected an image that everyone was to worship—the image, the idol, the icon, the brand called, *Nebuchadnezzar*. But when they called these three Jewish boys and put them in front of King Nebuchadnezzar, he said to them, *"I'm going to give you one more opportunity. You can bow to me and to the idol, or you're going to be burned in a fiery furnace."*

I love the way they responded:

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But **even if** He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the golden statue that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18 NASB, *emphasis added*).

Do you see that little phrase, “Even if”? That’s the difference faith makes! Fear is always asking, “What if?” but faith says, “Even if.” Even if the worst, imaginable thing comes and faces me, I still know I serve the God of absolute power, and my confidence and trust is in Him! I refuse to be intimidated by circumstances or dictated by fear. I will stand in faith! Which brings me to the third affirmation, the third biblical revelation concerning God.

Foundation #3

God Is a Promise Maker and a Promise Keeper

After God says, “I am with you... I am your God” (Isaiah 41:10a), God offers three very specific promises:

“I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you” (Isaiah 41:10b).

Now the Bible is many things. It’s a book of history and certainly a book of biography. It’s a book where we read precepts of what’s right and what’s wrong, a book where we learn principles about how to make wise decisions. It’s a book of prophecy about things to come. But the greatest thing I can say to you today is that this book, the Bible, is the **promise book**. It is God’s Word of promise to His people.

It is certainly, at a minimum, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Covenant with Abraham was the promise of what God would do through a nation to bring a Savior. And the New Covenant is what Christ came to do and has done for us. It’s important for us to know God is a God who makes and keeps His promises.

So what are the three foundational things we’ve discussed? (1) God is always present. (2) God is absolute in power. (3) God is a promise maker and a promise keeper. I know many of you know, love, and study the Word of God. Confessionally, we would all say, “Yes, I believe this!” But the tragedy is that what we say we believe, and what we have heard and known rarely gets translated to the places where we walk and the pathways where we live.

Have you in recent days been on a path or maybe in a room where you were trying to walk through and navigate, but it was dark and you couldn’t see? Whenever that happens, there’s something we automatically want to do—turn on or get a light to make sure we don’t trip or stumble, so can find our way. We are accustomed to yet another default behavior—reaching here, finding this, swiping here, turning on that. Suddenly we’ve got light! Although we get the light on in that dark room or on that

dark path, let me ask you, where do you shine the light? We want it in front of us to illuminate where we're going, right?

Can I say the problem with most of our Christianity is that we've spent so much time shining our light on our heads that it never gets to our feet? Oh, I've got the light! I know the light! I've got the light on me! Look at the light! But if the light doesn't shine before us, then frankly, we're never going to go anywhere in our walk with God or in the struggles of life.

The Psalmist said,

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

And it is that pathway of light, that foot-lighting that is needed for each and for every one of us in our walk with the Lord. The beauty of God's promises we read here in Isaiah 41:10 are promises that speak to us in the path of life. What are they?

- **In your weakness, "I will strengthen you."**

What is the opposite of strength? Weakness. When God says, "I will strengthen you" (Isaiah 41:10b), God is saying, *"I see and know that you are weak. I know you know you're weak."* Every one of us struggles with the weakness of our humanity, the weakness of our wills, the weakness of our flesh, and the weakness of our limitations. Weakness is a constant, consuming reality for us.

The Apostle Paul—possibly the greatest Christian who ever lived—struggled throughout his life in ministry with a weakness. I don't know exactly what it was, but I know it was something so significant that Paul kept saying, *"God, deliver me. Deliver me. Deliver me."*

There's a record of this found in 2 Corinthians:

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ... For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9, 10b).

Hard to believe, isn't it? None of us want to be weak or vulnerable. And yet, I stand in front of you today to tell you that some of my best days in ministry have come when I've had the breath knocked out of me, when I really didn't know where I was going to find my next breath, when I really didn't

know if I wanted to go on any further, when I really thought, *"It's done!"* Yet, God has picked me up in my weakness, and God has used weakness to teach me His strength.

Earlier this year, I was teaching a particular passage and one morning, I wrote this down in a journal:

"The critical issue is not just enduring a trial but overcoming the trauma of our trial with hope in the gospel. Life is more than enduring the grind and grit of adversity we all share in humanity; it is allowing grace to turn tragedy into glory and allowing God to prove His goodness in our weakness."

God says, "[In your weakness], I will strengthen you" (Isaiah 41:10b).

- **In your willingness, "I will help you."**

We all know the word, *help*! It's probably the most common prayer we pray outside of the word, *bless*. *"Lord, help me... Lord, bless me... Lord, help me... Lord, bless me... Bless me... Help me."* That's how we pray, right?

The word, *help*, used here in the original Hebrew language is a word that speaks of military reinforcements. It's the idea of an army that is on the front line. They're pressing. They're pushing in the heat of battle. The only way they're going to continue—the only way they're going to be restored and to win—is to keep having reinforcements move to the front. When God says, "I will help you" (Isaiah 41:10b), He's talking about providing the reinforcement, providing the strength, providing what you don't have, but what He has, what He gives, and what He brings to the battle when you are willing to trust Him.

God honors faith, and faith honors God. One of the greatest challenges in life is walking by faith.

Elisha, a prophet of God in the Old Testament, had been prophesying and doing the ministry of God when he met resistance. There was an army coming to attack the people of Israel. The Bible says in 2 Kings 6 that one morning, Elisha's servant got up and went outside and the entire city was surrounded by an army! He came inside in panic mode, afraid, melting down with anxiety, and said, "What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15b). And Elisha walked the servant back out the door and prayed, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17a). And when the LORD opened his eyes, the servant realized the army of God had completely surrounded the other army that was there.

We can't always see what God is doing or going to do, but when we trust Him, when we are willing to follow Him and take that next step with Him, God moves and God works. God likes risk takers!

I thank God a lot for the testimony of this church. You have not been resistors; you have been risk takers! Thank God for a church that's had that heart. Thank you for giving me the privilege of being a pastor of a church full of people who are not always looking for a way to resist. Don't change that. Don't do that. You have been an unbelievable source of encouragement and blessing because you are always willing to take a risk with God.

I was here only a very short period of time when we outgrew our facility here. Although we are still struggling today to park everyone and seat everyone, at the time, I didn't believe we needed to build more buildings here or over build this community. We began to talk about going to a second location. Initially I thought it would be a location maybe somewhere in Evans, just a few miles away—a nice storefront location where people could go to church there and people could go to church here.

I remember as we were praying about the location, I began to sense God was disrupting and saying, *"No. If you're going to go somewhere, you need to go out on mission. You don't need to have a church of convenience; you need to have a church of mission."*

We ended up prayerfully being led of the Spirit to Grovetown which was a community that was very much in transition. We didn't know what the future would be. We just knew that Fort Gordon and thousands of people were in that area because of the United States military and the long-standing position of the United States Army. We said, "Hey, maybe we'll try to reach people who are in the army. Let the government bring them here, we reach them for Christ, then send them back into the world." That was kind of our motto: "Make disciples and multiply disciple makers."

Little did we know when we stretched out and began to invest money and buy the first lease—ultimately to buy a 40,000 square foot warehouse—God would take that piece of property, and within a matter of months, the entire unit of every part of the Armed Forces of the United States would be moved into this region and all branches of military service would be connected together in what would become America's cyber center—an epicenter of new technology and new opportunity—and people from everywhere would come here! That community exploded and that church exploded! I have been amazed to see what God did, starting in 2014, and taking us to today.

Then we came to the end of 2019/beginning of 2020. I had been here about 12 years at that time, and we were talking about what we wanted to do in the future. On March 13 (Friday the 13th) of 2020, the entire world shut down due to the COVID pandemic. Churches were closed and for the first time ever across America and even around the world, churches were empty on Easter Sunday because of what was happening in the world around us. However, I was absolutely convinced that while there were

issues and concerns about large gatherings indoors, all the evidence said that if you're outside, you're going to be okay.

We put up a big sign after about three or four weeks, that simply said, "The building is closed, but the church is not." We put up tents behind The Edge building, and our people began to come, pray, and assemble. We did this throughout the summer. It was hot, but God blessed and used it. Then we began to reassemble inside, and I was wondering and thinking, *"God, are we done? Have we had our best days at Warren together? You've blessed us. We've grown. You added the Grovetown campus, and all those things were wonderful."* Yeah, but I really thought that maybe our height of heights was behind us. Yet since that time, God has done more in the life and ministry of Warren during the last five years with the regathering and revisioning of where we are today than I have seen in my entire ministry!

God moved and worked in a way in which we were able—through what happened—to ultimately end up with an adoption of the Belvedere campus. And that campus exploded. And then we have the Crossbridge campus. And then we started our Hope Women's Center. Amid all of that, we began our Together at Warren and our Residency Ministry where we will, as of this year, have 40 young people who have a future involvement in ministry, having spent a year with us being trained and equipped and being sent out.

We have built mission partnerships globally, and we have had the most wonderful relationship with a church in Augusta, Maine—Augusta to Augusta—a connection we've made together, and we are now sponsoring five churches in Maine. And this week, we have had a team of 23 students from Augusta, Maine who have been here working with us and blessing our community. Their campus pastor, Jeff Morgan, is here with us along with Zach Woods, their student pastor. That's been another place where God has put us in partnership, and God has blessed us.

We can't ever begin to imagine what God will do with people who are willing to say, *"Lord, just take us and use us."*

I could have never imagined. There was not some master plan. There was not some big dream. It was just a matter of day by day, week by week as a church following God, and God has blessed this church. But folks, He's not finished! Let's just be sure we remember how important it is to hold on to willingness.

A lot of you know the name Forrest Frank. He has a very popular song called, "Your Way is Better." It's been a hit not only in the Christian community, but also everywhere with people seeing and doing the

motions. But last weekend, Forrest Frank had a very serious accident. He was on a skateboard and fell. As a result, he fractured some of the vertebra in his back. Struggling with pain and all that was happening, he actually wrote another song, "God's Got My Back:"

*God's got my back
Even when I fall or get attacked
God's got my back
Even when I'm low and full of lack
God's got my back
Even when my soul is full of sorrow
I don't have to worry about tomorrow.
Why's that?
'Cause God's got my—*

*Back, back, back, right there, never left
I could feel Your presence in every single breath
Sometimes we just gotta take a rest
Flowers like to bloom in the season that is best*

I just want you to take that little jingle home in your heart today and remember this: God's got your back! And when you're willing, God says, "I will help you."

• **In your waywardness, "I will not let you go."**

We are all wanderers. The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, says it this way:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Jesus came and went to the cross that through the power of His death for us, He might reconcile us to God, and that He might give us a right standing with God. That's why He ever lives at the right hand of God, the Righteous One, who has hold of our lives. Though we are unrighteous, we are made righteous in the work of Christ.

"[God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

While it doesn't make sense, no matter how many times we pull away, no matter how many times we keep tripping over the same spot on the rug so to speak, no matter how many times we keep going down, God never lets us go!

I don't know where you are today; I don't know what you're facing. Many of you are listening to the lie and hearing the fear that says, "What if?... What if?... What if?" But I want you to know that even if you have fallen, Jesus still loves you, cares for you, and He will hold on to you!

Jesus said,

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

You have the assurance of an amazing anchor that touches every part of your life. Are you anxious or are you anchored?

I was 15 years old, laying on the floor in my bedroom on Raymore Road in Memphis, Tennessee, and I had my Bible open. I'd just begun as a 15-year-old to try to read my Bible regularly, and I was laying face down on that green shag carpet that was so popular in the 1970s. It was carpet you didn't vacuum; you raked it!

I'll never forget laying down in that carpet reading one night, studying the book of James, and I found this cross reference to Isaiah 41. I read Isaiah 41:10. I liked that verse. I wrote it down, and highlighted it in my Bible.

Just a few months later, God impressed on my heart a call to ministry. And just like Moses, I said, "Lord, I can't speak. How can I make a commitment? I'm just a young person." I mean, why would I do this?

And God said,

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

50 years later I'm here to tell you, God is faithful! I wouldn't be here telling you this if He hasn't been working this message in me. God is always present. God is absolute in power. God is a promise maker and a promise keeper. Don't let anything hold you back from coming to Him!

Lord, thank You for this time today. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the privilege of being assembled and worshiping God in this moment. I pray this would be a moment of response, not emotional response, but a response of faith and trust, a response that says, "Today, I believe! I believe Jesus is the Son of God, the One and only Savior of the world, and today I'm giving my faith, my trust in Him."

If you've never called upon the name of the Lord, do it right now and say, "Lord save me!" Maybe today you would say, "I believe. I believe that because I know Jesus, I need to follow Him just as these did in baptism this morning. Baptism is an expression of faith—not as an expression of good works and ability—but faith that you are willing to follow Him.

Maybe today you would say, "I believe in God. I believe in His Word. I believe in His Son. I believe He has established the church. While churches are broken, imperfect, and filled with people who are, thank God we don't put our faith and trust in the church; we put our faith in Christ! But then we're gathered with God's people!

Lord, gather some today—those who are weak, those who are wayward, yet those who are willing! God, would You move and work in this moment of response? In Jesus' name, Amen.

This is an edited version of a message preached from the pulpit of Warren Church, 3203 Washington Road, Augusta, GA 30907 on Sunday, July 27, 2025, by Dr. David H. McKinley.

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