

Isaiah 43 22 to 44 5

Isaiah 43:22-28 (NKJV)

22 "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel.

23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.

24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.

25 "I, *even I, am* He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

26 Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your *case*, that you may be acquitted.

27 Your first father sinned, And your mediators have transgressed against Me.

28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.

Isaiah 44:1-5 (NKJV)

1 "Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, And Israel whom I have chosen.

2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, *who* will help you: 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant; And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;

4 They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.'

5 One will say, '*I am* the LORD'S'; Another will call *himself* by the name of Jacob; Another will write *with* his hand, 'The LORD'S,' And name *himself* by the name of Israel.

Now remember our context. The broader context is faithfulness to God as opposed to idolatry. Last week we were told of God's purpose for us. We were told what we are for. And we were told the amazing advantages of serving this God who has a wonderful purpose for us. When we face the hard things that we are sure to face, God's presence will be with us and accompany us, sustain us, and protect us. We have zero reason to live in fear, to harbor fearful thoughts.

We saw how God is arranging all of human history to serve the purposes He has for His people. We ended on verse 21 where God says **This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.**

Now what is the response from the people who have so greatly benefited from God's grace?

Well, first let's start with what we see in our own lives. How often do we look at our lives like God looks at our lives? How often do we regard our situations and positions from God's perspective? How often do we say, well, it is clearly God's position that I praise God in the present circumstances He has placed me in. I am so fortunate to be able to serve Him in this circumstance. I am so fortunate to have meaning in resisting the sin I am tempted to do today. How often do we commit to remaining faithfully in fellowship with Him, praying with every breath, Thy will be done?

Where did we fall this week? Where did we fail this week? Were our failures due to God not living according to **His** promises? Were any God's fault? Of course not. Were not all of them a wrenching of our lives from God's purpose, a statement of discontent for His purpose? I suspect if we look at them closely enough, most, if not all of them are an expression of our own desire to do things our way.

So now, what does Israel do? How do they respond to God's purpose? They respond the way all flesh responds to God's purpose. They respond like we respond when we are not living faithfully.

22 "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel.

23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.

24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.

What we have here is not as much a picture of **inactivity** as it is a picture of **insincerity**. This is a rebuke to a people who are going through the motions of serving God. But they really don't have the heart for it. Their service to God is a burden to them which, in turn, is a burden to God.

There seem to be two ways of understanding our text. The first is to take it literally at face value. But when we do that we find an apparent contradiction. Other places in Isaiah we see that the people are going through the motions of serving God. But God is not impressed. So it would seem best to me to interpret this text assuming this other lazy worship is still happening.

Have you ever been given a task to do by your parent or your husband or your boss? And you went through the motions of accomplishing it. But your heart wasn't in it. You knew what was needed, but you only did the exact limit of what was clearly stated to you. That is the attitude we are seeing in this text. Look how the word "weary" is used here.

Weary in our text is **A verb indicating to work, to become weary with work. It indicates putting forth great effort and exertion to accomplish something**

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

This is a people who are weary of God being such a burden to them. And God has a complaint. The things they are weary of, they really aren't doing for God anyway. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Unless you think that God will make every price you pay utterly worthwhile, what you are sacrificing has no value to God. Unless you think that you are the fortunate one, having the opportunity to serve God, what you do has no value. Faith points us to a pay day worth more than the work we ever did. Without faith, God can be a burden to us, demanding much and giving us little. Faith says it is exactly the opposite. God demand little and rewards much.

So the **people are complaining** about all the things that God demands them to do. But God issues **His** complaint. None of all your fake worship has really been about **Me**. You might be calling out. But it isn't **to me**. You might be offering sheep, but they aren't **to me**. I have not forced you to do what you are doing. No nothing you have been doing is at all satisfying to me, God says. You are going through the motions but there is nothing behind it. Nope. You are acting like serving Me is a burden to you. But you wouldn't know. Because you aren't even serving **me**. You are serving **yourselves**.

No, I will tell you where the burden is, God says. They burden is **on me** watching you live in your state of sin, in your state of faithlessness, and joylessness, and fruitlessness. I am the one who should be weary. Not you. I have been the one burdened. Not you.

But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.

I think that is the gist of our text. The people are blaming their lack of true worship of God **on God**. They are saying we would serve you better if it didn't cost so much, if it wasn't so much of a drag. And God is saying, no, it is you who are the drag.

This is something we all understand but it is hard to put into words. We see it in our close relationships. Maybe it is with a friend or a spouse or our children. How do you feel when that person treats you like you are simply a

burden? You are not called upon to have relationship. The relationship appears to hold no value to the person. All they are interested in is themselves and how you can serve their interests. Maybe they will go through the motions. Maybe they will do their duty. Maybe they will fulfill the letter of the law. But you know they don't get it. They don't get what **they could have** by simply investing in the relationship, by simply appreciating the relationship. We know when that happens. But it is hard to put into words. Now we are faulty. So sometimes we bring rejection upon ourselves. Sometimes, if we changed how we respond, we would have more of what we long for. But with God one thing is sure. The problem is never on His end. The problem is with us.

Now, let's make an application here. It is a very simple question.

How satisfying **to God** is your relationship with Him?

The question is not **how satisfied with God are you**. That is the American question. The **important** question is how satisfied, how pleased is God with how you go about living your life for Him? Is your quiet time or study time or prayer time satisfying to Him? Does He see someone going about it with the right attitude for the right reason? Or do we do it at all? Are we guilty of the first verse? On a normal day, do we really call out to Him at all? Is His relationship even important enough to prioritize? We can be pretty sure that a relationship we invest nothing in is not likely to be very satisfying to the other party.

All of us yearn for meaningful relationships. And we know what they look like. We know what it is to have one. We just need to look at it in reverse. Do we **give to God** what **we hope to get** from someone **who loves us**? Do we have a relationship with God that we would want someone to have with us. Sure there are lots of other factors here, but I hope you can see what I am getting at. Is our relationship with God a burden to us like the people in our text? If so we can be certain that our relationship is even a greater burden to God, since He has loved us perfectly.

How much pleasure does our relationship with God **grant God**. Is our attitude toward God a **burden to God** or a **pleasure to God**? In our heart of hearts, what do we really think about what God requires of us? Do we see ourselves as being the most fortunate people on the planet? Or do we think it is a drag to **have to do** what God requires. I don't think it is hard to figure what it is that God would prefer. Are we going through the motions and doing what we absolutely must? Or do we love this God who has sent His Son to save us from our sins to the place we are glad to do anything He asks?

²⁵ "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

There are 3 points here. First, it is God who does the sin blotting out. Second, He does it by Him and from Him and FOR Him. And third, when He is done our past sins are not held against us.

What we are getting from all of this is that **God's people are not the catalyst** for sins forgiveness. None of us would have come to God if it was not God who acted first. There would be no salvation if salvation was initiated by man chasing after God. It simply would not happen.

And while every human being has the desire to place themselves at the center of the universe, that spot is reserved for only God. God does not save us because **we** are special. God saves us because **He is special** and He deserves to have some people who recognize that fact. So He creates such a person and calls us to Himself in a way we **cannot**, and **we do not want to** resist.

And lastly, He will not remember our sins. Has God suddenly lost His omniscience? Of course not. That would be ridiculous. It is not that God cannot remember the facts. It is that those facts are now inadmissible as evidence. They are not brought into any court cases against us. That is what forgiveness does. It removes them as evidence against us. Oh Praise God. Even if our sins yesterday, our lack of love for God, our lack of love for each other, were brought into a court case, we would be damned. But that is all inadmissible evidence on judgment day. It shows us ourselves now and our need for God. But it does not damn us. Oh praise God for that.

Like we said last week, our history is factual. And our history is useful when we can see it for what it is and we can agree with God regarding what really happened. It is wonderful when we can truly repent or we can truly accept God's love in spite of our suffering. But we can move beyond the past once we tell the truth about it. And for a believer, it is inadmissible evidence for our judgment, but it is all admissible evidence in proving God's grace.

²⁶ Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your *case*, that you may be acquitted.

²⁷ Your first father sinned, And your mediators have transgressed against Me.

²⁸ Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.

OK. Now God just made a claim. He says, I save you, I forgive you, and it is all on me. This is not something you merit. You did not deserve this. You did not earn this. You did not deserve to be a Christian. You did not reach some level

of wisdom where you exceeded all the wisdom of your associates and reached out to God in some wisdom of your own making. Nope. Nothing like that. Now God is taunting His people. He is saying, you guys are so full of yourselves. You think you are so great. Tell you what. I will give you a platform. Let's debate this. Prove to me that you have won my salvation by your own merit. Prove to me what a superior human being you are. Let's get it on. Show me how you did not need grace. Show me how you earned your way in the door. Then you win. You will be forgiven of sin based on the law instead of grace.

Oh, but wait. Oh, never mind. You don't need to bother. Here is the truth. Verse 27 is the old testament equivalent of **For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God**. Adam sinned. Even those who are the responsible parties to mediate between God and man have sinned. These would have been the priests and the Jewish leadership. Today the modern day equivalent might be your elders. I am sure you have not noticed it, but we are sinners too. There is no contending to get credit for our own salvation. No sense even attending that debate. Everyone there shows themselves to be unqualified by the fact that they exist. We have all come through a sinful lineage. I think that is the point.

Now, verse 28 is the sad verse.

28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.

Remember, this is a people going through the motions. This is a people **evaluating God** instead of caring about **God evaluating them**. This is a people who think they have reason **to be wearied by serving God** but see no problem with the truth that they are really **wearying God**. And God says, ok. I will bring down and make common all the things that you think are precious. I will let you suffer the fate of those who do not have a true God, since worshipping a true God does not seem to be overly appealing to you. This is an awful fate. This is a horrible fate for God's people, people who should know better, people who should do better, people who should think better.

But what is the end to which God moves?

Do you remember when you had chosen to respond to life's situations in the manner you wanted to, not caring what God said? Maybe it was to claim a pleasure that God forbids. Maybe it was to react to a displeasure in a way that God forbids? Maybe it was just to do what your heart told you you must do? It really doesn't matter. It is all the same. To what end did it lead? It led to the discipline of God. It led to a bad end that would point the people of God

to a good end. We made it way harder on ourselves than we had to. If we would have just done what God says, the dues we would have had to pay would have been so very much lighter. We could have avoided all those aching regrets, those spots where we want to hit the “undo” button. We would have not wasted all that time.

God will get us where He wants us. But we often make Him respond in ways He would prefer to avoid.

Isaiah 44:1-5 (NKJV)

1 "Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, And Israel whom I have chosen.

2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you: 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant; And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

Do you see the emphasis in this passage. God talks about **MY** servant and the one **I HAVE CHOSEN**. We need to realize that this is the emphasis. Humans are not the focal point. God is. And it goes on. Who made us and formed us? Was it us? Was it our mothers? Not according to this passage. All the credit for the existence of human beings is with God. That is why abortion is not an option for a Christian. It is not our business or our right to decide who is born and who is not. That is God's realm.

Look to at the fact that God is calling out to His people. He has something to say. And He is going to say it.

And the first thing He says?

Fear not. Fear not. I am really not sure that we can make enough out of this. When God says something **this often**, we had better be sure to pay attention. Why not fear. Well first, **God's people are chosen**. If God went out of His way to choose us from the billions of people that were available, doesn't it make sense that He has a plan that **He is going to carry out for us**? I think that is just plain logic. And this was not a last minute decision. The decision was made before conception. Before the beginning of time according to Ephesians.

3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;

4 They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.'

5 One will say, 'I am the LORD'S'; Another will call himself by the name of Jacob; Another will write with his hand, 'The LORD'S,' And name himself by the name of Israel.

This is the end God has in mind. Remember last week we talked about water? Here it is again. God creates the thirst. And God quenches the thirst He

creates. That is how it works. Look how God combines thirst with the Holy Spirit. That is what we mentioned last week.

Here is a quote by brother Ortland.

On July 1, 1838, Robert Murray M'Cheyne preached on this verse in Isaiah and said to his congregation in Dundee,

When two travelers are going through the wilderness, you may know which of them is thirsty by his always looking out for wells.... So it is with thirsty believers; they love the Word, read and preached—they thirst for it more and more. Is it so with you, dear believing brethren? In Scotland, long ago, it used to be so. Often, after the blessing was pronounced, the people would not go away till they heard more. Ah! children of God, it is a fearful sign to see little thirst in you. I do not wonder much when the world stays away from our meetings for the Word and prayer; but ah! when you do, I am dumb—my soul will weep in secret places for your pride

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

It is important that we see what God promises. Lots of people think that God promises health and wealth in this life time. Here we see what God really promises. He promises the Holy Spirit to those who want it. He offers God living in us. He offers Immanuel, God with us. He offers truth to be applied to our inmost places. How much better could that be? We see this in the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Is that what we are thirsty for? Do our hearts want more of God? Do our schedules look like we are looking for wells? Do we even find a few minutes to squeeze God in? Do we understand what this says? This isn't as much an evidence that we aren't doing our duty or going through the motions. It is more an indication that we are not addicted to the resources God has for us. We are more thirsty for the here and now than for a relationship with God. How can God possibly be satisfied with a relationship that we sink so little into?

And look at the results. God will produce results. There will be plenty where there were only a few to begin with. God is going to have plenty of people to worship Him. He is not going to run into a shortage.

⁴ They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.'

⁵ One will say, 'I am the LORD'S'; Another will call *himself* by the name of Jacob; Another will write *with his hand*, 'The LORD'S,' And name *himself* by the name of Israel.

We have seen revivals like this in history. Whole villages have come to Christ, hundreds at a time. These events seem to break out like wildfires, when and

where God chooses. But we are seeing this prophecy fulfilled in our world in our lifetime. And it will continue to happen. It has to continue to happen until the last person comes to Christ. For our God will be glorified.

Mr Ortland says this about verse 5.

Notorious sinners become notorious believers. *That is what God does as the magnitude of his grace breaks upon us with reviving power.*

[Isaiah 44:1-5](#) is God's way of saying, "Here's the future of the world. I will create new realities by the sheer force of my grace. Your part is not to deny your thirst but to let me quench it. And *why do I do all this?*"

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Verse 6 is where we will begin to answer that question. That is for next week. So in closing, on a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied would you be with a person who spends as much time with you as you spend with God? How satisfied would you be in a relationship where that person pours in as much enthusiastic energy in your relationship as you spend knowing God? Would you be wearied with such a person's friendship? Having your pictures on their wall and your sayings on their fridge wouldn't really mean much if they never see you at their door, if they never get a message or a phone call or an email or a visit from you.

Why not commit to giving our greatest love our greatest effort this week? If you are like me you will say, I know I will fail. I always have. I never keep my commitment. I sleep in or I dose off. Well, if we are going to fail, let's fail at a higher level. If we have to fail a million times, let's keep getting up and doing it again until we succeed in being what we should be in our relationship to God, giving Him the time and energy and devotion He deserves.

Will you commit to that? Let's commit to giving God a relationship He is pleased with.