

Sermon Notes & References
God's Precious People
Isaiah 43:1-7
January 23, 2011

A. Introduction

1. what's so special about being a Christian?

2. God's people, then and now^A

B. Past Isaiah 43:1, 3, 4

1. created, formed^B

2. redeemed, called^C

3. the price paid^D

C. Present Isaiah 43:1-2, 4

1. trials

2. the linkage of love^E

D. Future Isaiah 43:5-7

1. the ingathering of God's people^F

2. all for God's glory

E. Conclusion

^A Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 3:6, Hebrews 11:39-40

^B Genesis 1:27, 2:7, Exodus 19:5-6

^C Romans 8:29-30

^D 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Peter 2:9-10

^E Romans 5:8

^F 1 Corinthians 2:9, 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

A. Introduction

1. What is so special about being a Christian?
 - a. that may be a question in your heart this morning
 - (A) especially if you are here and have never accepted Jesus into your heart to save you from your sin
 - (B) thinking you are not a sinner, not need to be saved
 - (C) if so, may God's Holy Spirit convict you of your need from His word this morning
 - b. or, as a believer this morning it could be that
 - (A) this question is still at the back of your mind
 - (B) you remember the joy you once felt when you received Christ and your conscience relieved of guilt – but now that seems so far away, so distant
 - (C) or, concerns and troubles of the present overshadow your life, so that spiritual reality is masked from view
 - (D) or, though things are going well with you, it doesn't seem to relate to your being a Christian
 - c. but this passage in Isaiah has an answer to that question and any similar ones that may be on your heart

2. these words were spoken to Israel
 - a. to an Israel that had turned their back on Yahweh, the God who had been so gracious to them
 - b. now Isaiah speaks prophetically to those living over a century later in exile in Babylon
 - c. they would have been asking themselves a similar question – which is in fact, the same question – what is so special about being an Israelite?
 - d. some among them would ask the question scoffingly
 - e. some would have asked it searchingly

3. Israel is the ancient people of God
 - a. descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (a.k.a. Israel)
 - b. heirs to the promise to those patriarchs, that in them all the nations of the world would be blessed
 - c. in a special way they were given a land in which they were to live and statutes to govern that land

- d. for from Israel, born in that land was to come the Messiah, the Saviour of the world
- e. this passage is spoken particularly to these exiles

4. but it is as true for those who are God's people today

- a. to those who are in Messiah, in Christ
- b. "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
(Galatians 3:29)
- c. and Ephesians 3:6, "to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"
- d. and there is, therefore, a continuum between the OT and NT people of God, for Hebrews, after listing the heroes of the OT believers, says 11:39-40, "39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."
- e. this introduction is to show that the truth that Isaiah speaks to the exiles is equally truth for the Christian – God does not change – we can have the same assurances

5. the assurance is given that to be one of God's people is special

- a. the Bible uses the same language to describe God's NT people as it does His OT people
- b. and the words used are something special
- c. they are God's precious people; past, present and future

B. Past

1. my forget-ory seems much better than my memory

- a. Maureen has many times told me of my saying something or doing something of which I have not recall at all
 - (A) surely I didn't promise that, did I?
 - (B) occasionally I can do the same to her
- b. having a forget-ory is a good thing, sometimes, in that it removes the painfulness of some of our experiences
- c. but God remembers His promises

2. Isaiah 43:1 – “But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!’”
- a. the words ‘Creator’ and ‘formed’ call us back to the first few chapters of Genesis
 - (A) “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27)
 - (B) the word ‘create’ means to create from nothing, or something from none-thing:
 - (C) “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7)
 - (D) the word ‘formed’ has a more intimate association; it is used of craftsmen forming some article of furniture by hand, and portrays God as taking an intimate and personal hand in bringing mankind into being
 - b. so it was with Israel
 - (A) 70 people had gone down to Egypt with Jacob in the days of the famine in the land
 - (B) they had grown into a multitude by Moses’ time, but they were no nation, but rather an enslaved people
 - (C) in a day, with their deliverance at the first Passover, God created them a nation
 - (D) with His infinite care He led them day and night, gave them the law, provided food, tested them, chastised them, and formed them with this covenant promise: “5 ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6a and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ ...” (Exodus 19:5-6a)
 - c. in the Hebrew, ‘Creator’ and ‘formed’ are participles
 - (A) literally: ‘creating you’ and ‘forming you’
 - (B) this emphasizes God’s actions and His activity in the creation and formation of this nation, Israel
 - (C) the time, the definite event when this took place, is described in the next part of the verse
 - (1) I have redeemed you
 - (2) I have called you by name
 - (D) God’s act of redemption is manifold
 - (1) it took place in the delivery out of Egypt

- (2) it took place in the return from the lands of exile
 - (a) to those in captivity, this was yet in the future
 - (b) to God, speaking, it was as good as done
- (3) it took place at the cross
- (E) God's act of calling is assuring
 - (1) in this context, God is calling those who are His own chosen people; Christ, the good shepherd, calls each of His sheep by name
 - (2) it is the call that is effective because those who hear it respond in faith to become saints of God
 - (3) Paul uses the similar terms to describe God's work in those who become Christians, "29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

3. how can this take place?

- a. verse 3b gives answer from Israel's history, "... I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place."
 - (A) this was certainly true from Israel's first redemption, that from the land of Egypt
 - (B) for in that deliverance, a price was exacted from Egypt and its gods, as the plagues struck each of them one by one, until the first-born of the land were slain
 - (C) in a sense it also took place in the deliverance from Babylon, for after Cyrus sent Israel back to their land, he and his son conquered these countries named
- b. verse 4b may also speak of this, "... I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life."
 - (A) that Israel was delivered to God's glory meant that other heathen lands were conquered
 - (B) that Messiah-Christ, God's ultimate deliverance might be born in Bethlehem, other nations rose and fell
- c. but there is a further meaning in this verse; literally it says, '... I will give man (Adam) instead of you ...'
 - (A) redemption has a price beyond our capacity to pay

- (B) for Israel it came at the price of other nations
- (C) for sin it comes at the price of a man, "... 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45), the price of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to take our punishment for sin

4. being a Christian is special because it means that through faith,
- a. God has taken an intimate interest in him or her;
 - b. being in Christ, he or she has become a new creation;
 - c. he or she is being conformed to the image of His Son;
 - d. of all such he's and she's it is now true that, "But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)
 - e. and that is very, very special

C. Present

1. let's read further from verse 1: "1b you are Mine! 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you."
- a. when trials come
 - (A) and trials always seem to be present
 - (B) then God has special words of assurance
 - (C) that there will be no lasting harm to His children
 - (D) and He gives two statements to support this
 - (1) you are Mine (which really belongs to verse 1, but as you will see in a moment, it applies here, too)
 - (2) I will be with you
 - b. now, in the English there is a verb in each of those; 'are' in the first, and 'will be' in the second; but in the Hebrew there is no verb in either; literally, they read
 - (A) to me, you – and –

- (B) with you, I
- (C) and these statements are timeless: they apply to the past, present and future
- (D) they tell us that the Eternal God, the Faithful and Unchanging One, has linked Himself
 - (1) first, in the words of Isaiah, to His people Israel
 - (2) more, in the words of Scripture, to all His people
- (E) and that linkage, of us mere mortals, transient, passing to the One true God, gives assurance that in whatever state we find ourselves, we are ever joined to Him

2. how can this be? verse 4a: "Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honoured and I love you, ..."
- a. all true due to the great love that God has for His people
 - b. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
(Romans 5:8)

3. Being a Christian is special because it means that, not on any thing we have done, but purely by His grace, God has set his love upon us, and He considers us special, honoured, precious.

D. Future

- 1. you are special to Me, says God, because I am going to bring you all back together to live with me
 - a. "5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth," (Isaiah 43:5-6)
 - b. it is talking about the future because it is speaking about the offspring of the exiles, their future descendants
 - c. there is also a tender word here from the Father God, both His sons and His daughters he will bring back
- 2. this ingathering from the four corners and the ends of the earth has been interpreted as fulfilled
 - a. by some in the return of the exiles from captivity
 - b. by some, either in whole or in part, in the return in 1947
 - c. by some as to yet take place in the future
 - d. by some as that which even now taking place of God, one by one is calling men, women, children to

faith, gathering them into the body of Jesus Christ, into the church

e. but when the whole tapestry that God is weaving in history is laid out before us, and we see it from His side instead of from ours, it will, I am sure, surpass all these and other ideas of men, and indeed be true, "but just as it is written, 'things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.'" (1 Corinthians 2:9)

3. yet there is an ingathering that will take place

a. for which we eagerly await

b. 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53), and of which we read further

c. "16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

d. who is going to be there? verse 7: "Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

e. all the saints of God from OT and NT whose faith is in God

4. what's so special about being a Christian? ... having a special future, a future that brings glory to our God

E. Conclusion

1. that is what is so special about being a Christian

a. and it doesn't rest in us or our works or our abilities

b. but it all rests upon God and upon His love for us in Christ

c. how is it with you and your soul this morning?

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