

Promises You Can Trust

Isaiah 43:1-7

January 9, 2022

Welcome again to worship. It's so good to be together. I invite you to turn 6 in your bulletin. And if you are online, thank you for joining us. Grab your spiritual journal and Bible, or if you would like a bulletin emailed to you, let us know.

Today, I want us to consider promises. We live our lives based on promises. We came here today because we believed in the promise that we would hold worship, that our cars would get us here and back safely, and that this sermon wouldn't be too boring!

We'll go home with the promise that though the Bengals may not win today, they are still going to the playoffs. The Browns? Not so much.

We go to bed tonight with the promise that we will be safe from the elements and that our alarm will get us up for another day.

We also rely on the promises of God.

The prophet Isaiah, writing about the captivity of his people Israel in Babylon, after they had turned from God and failed to follow His commands, and after He had punished them, He gave them promises. When they felt like they were at their lowest, He gave them promises. I invite you to turn 6 in your bulletin as we look at Isaiah 43:1-7:

*But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west. I will say to the north and south, 'Bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.'"*¹

I want us to look at 8 promises of God, promises you can count on, in this passage.

First, He calls us by name.

Look at the end of verse 1:

*I have called you by name.*²

Our God is not a God who does not know us. He knows everything about us, down to how many hairs we have.

Later, in chapter 49, God tells Isaiah to write:

*Listen to me, all you in distant lands! Pay attention, you who are far away! The LORD called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name.*³

He calls us by name.

¹ Isaiah 43:1-7 (NLT2)

² Isaiah 43:1 (NLT2)

³ Isaiah 49:1 (NLT2)

Second, We are His.

We are His. The end of verse 1:

*I have called you by name; you are mine.*⁴

Hear those words again: You are mine.

Near the end of his life, Paul wrote these words to his beloved spiritual son

Timothy:

*But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The LORD knows those who are his,"*⁵

Hear it one more time. God says, "You are mine."

Third, He will be with us.

Beginning of verse 2:

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.*⁶

This was probably a reminder to the people of Israel of the story of the parting of the Red Sea, then later the Jordan River when they crossed into the promised land. No matter how deep the water is, God will be with us.

Sir John Franklin lived an exciting life of adventure in the British Navy, which took him to many parts of the world. As a signal midshipman in the Battle of Trafalgar, he transmitted Nelson's memorable message from the flagship, "England expects every man to do his duty." He was a devout Christian and found great strength in reading the Bible. His men said they would rather have him hold a service than most ministers.

In 1845, he was put in command of two ships to look for a passage across the polar seas. The last communication from them came through their contact with a whaling ship in Baffin Bay in Canada.

Many expeditions were made in the next ten years to learn the fate of Franklin's ships. Pieces of equipment found on beaches told of shipwreck in the icy seas. One of the books was Franklin's Bible with the following verses underlined: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."⁷ There was also a book of devotions with a page turned down at the verse: "Fear not... When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee".⁸

Where was God when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the furnace? Where was Jesus when the disciples encountered a storm on the Sea of Galilee that scared them to death? Right there with them! God is with us.

Fourth, We will not succumb.

Look again at verse 2:

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.*⁹

Again, God says we will not be defeated, no matter the opposition, for the battle belongs to the Lord.¹⁰

⁴ Isaiah 43:1 (NLT2)

⁵ 2 Timothy 2:19 (NLT2)

⁶ Isaiah 43:2 (NLT2)

⁷ Psalm 139:9-10

⁸ Isaiah 43:1-2

⁹ Isaiah 43:2 (NLT2)

¹⁰ See 2 Chronicles 20:15

Now, you may be thinking, “I know people who believed, Christians, who still died from cancer or something else.”

FIRST TIME NOTICING THIS VERSE.

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.*¹¹

Let me ask you: does cancer or Alzheimer’s or heart attack or even COVID defeat a Christian. No! No! And again, I say “No.” As Paul wrote in Romans 8:35 and 37:

*Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?*¹²

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*¹³

We will not succumb, for Christ has defeated death, so instead of being no more, we experience paradise for all eternity.

Fifth, We are ransomed.

Look at Isaiah 43:1

*But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you...”*¹⁴

Now verses 3-4a:

*For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours...*¹⁵

What does this mean?

Well, to be ransomed means that you are entrapped in some prison (literal or figurative), either by your own doing or someone else’s. To be ransomed means that someone has paid for your release, your freedom.

The Bible is full of theology regarding ransom. Christ ransomed us and paid the sin debt for us by the shedding of His own blood.

But what do these verses mean? “Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours”?

This is a reference to years before when the Assyrian King Sennacherib overcame and disbursed the Jews of the northern Kingdom of Israel. Once he had defeated Samaria, and just as he was ready to fall upon Jerusalem, he heard that the armies of Egypt and other African countries were coming to meet him, and he went out to them, so that Jerusalem was miraculously spared.

While you may struggle with this idea, it shows that God is still in charge, and He will punish the wicked and save the righteous.

Sixth, We are honored.

Once again to verse 4:

¹¹ Isaiah 43:2 (NLT2)

¹² Romans 8:35 (NLT2)

¹³ Romans 8:37 (ESV)

¹⁴ Isaiah 43:1 (NLT2)

¹⁵ Isaiah 43:3-4 (NLT2)

*Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.*¹⁶

We are precious to God. Think about that for a moment. When the devil tries to tell you that you are no good, that no one loves you, that you don't measure up to others, remember what God says: "You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you."

The Apostle Peter wrote:

*... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession....*¹⁷

Seventh, We will be gathered.

Verses 5-6:

*Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west. I will say to the north and south, "Bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth."*¹⁸

God promises that though the people have been scattered due to their disobedience, God will not forget them. He will bring them back to the land of the forefathers.

And that's what happened. Seventy years after Judah was deported to Babylonia, God caused the Persian King Cyrus to send them home. And we have been seeing that once again since the establishment of the State of Israel since 1948.

But there is more to this than the people of Israel. Christian theologians see this promise and believe that the saints will be gathered together in heaven, the communion of the saints as we say, that your Christian loved ones are already together in heaven.

Finally, We are for His glory.

Verse 7:

*Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.*¹⁹

Our words, works, and lives should bring glory to God.

Jesus said:

*When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*²⁰

Later, as He was facing the cross, He prayed:

*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.*²¹

If you wonder what possible meaning your life could have, then you need look no farther but to give glory to God. If you wonder what the purpose of your deep waters, your rivers of difficulty, your fire of oppression might be, remember this: they are to give glory to God.

Therefore, after all these promises are made, you have one thing to do, and it comes from the very first verse:

¹⁶ Isaiah 43:4 (NLT2)

¹⁷ 1 Peter 2:9 (NLT2)

¹⁸ Isaiah 43:5-6 (NLT2)

¹⁹ Isaiah 43:7 (NLT2)

²⁰ John 15:8 (NLT2)

²¹ John 17:1 (NLT2)

But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine."²²

What are we to do?

Do not be afraid.

2 Timothy 1:7 says:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.²³

God wants us to walk in Faith, not fear. Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear cannot live where there is faith. Faith cannot work where there is fear. The love of God casts out all fear. Remember what I said at the beginning of the pandemic. It comes from Jesus:

Me phobos, mono pistos.²⁴

No fear, only faith. No fear, only faith.

Charles Spurgeon, the great 19th century preacher, wrote, "Comfort yourself with this thought: God says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." "The fire is hot, but he has chosen me; the furnace burns, but he has chosen me; these coals are hot, I do not love the place, but he has chosen me." Ah! It comes like a soft gale assuaging the fury of the flame. It is like some gentle wind fanning the cheeks; yes, this one thought arrays us in fireproof armor, against which the heat has no power. "Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty, you may come in at the door—God is in the house already, and he has chosen me. Sickness, you may come, but I will have this by my side for a balsam—God has chosen me. Whatever it is, I know that he has chosen me." The next comfort is that you have the Son of man with you in the furnace. In that silent bedchamber of yours, there sits by your side one whom you have not seen, but whom you love; and often when you know it not, he makes your bed in your affliction, and smooths your pillow for you. You are in poverty; but in that lonely house of yours that has nothing to cover its bare walls, where you sleep on a miserable straw mattress, you know that the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor; he often treads those bare floors, and putting his hands upon those walls he consecrates them! The Son of man is with you, Christian."²⁵

My friends, God makes promises that you can trust.

Because He lives, we can believe them, hold onto them, trust them, no matter what lays ahead. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

²² Isaiah 43:1 (NLT2)

²³ 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT2)

²⁴ See Mark 5:36

²⁵ 365 Days with Spurgeon - 365 Days with Spurgeon: Volume 1, Isaiah 43:1