

Called by His Name for His Glory – Isaiah 42:10 – 43:7

Introduction – We have seen (chapters 40 and on) that God is always at work for the good of His people even (and especially) during times He seems to have abandoned or forgotten us. “*God often digs the wells of joy with the spades of affliction*” – Isaac Watts. These prophecies of a coming exile but a promised return and renewal are not only for Israel in Isaiah’s day, nor for Israel during the days of Ezra/Nehemiah. Because these verses are quoted as fulfilled in the day of Christ, they are for us; they are for the days and journeys in which we live. And when this message, the depth of this gospel, gets ahold of you...

Sing a New Song (42:10-17) – ...you have to sing and shout to the Lord. And the choir isn’t big enough so we call the nations, all of them, to come and join in the New (covenant) Song (vv10-12). God wants our praise, but He wants to release us into this worship for which we were made and for which He is refitting us. It is worth thinking about why humanity sings, what motivates us to do so, and how God intends for us to use singing, song-writing and music. Here we see that one reason is to be able to release a heart-felt response to the victorious, gracious glory of God. God is determined to bring His victory and the Song of His victory to Judah and the ends of the earth. He is as fixated as a warrior in battle seeking His victory. He had held back quietly, but now is as focused as a woman bringing forth a newborn (vv13-14). He will remove all obstacles that might appear to be in His way (v15). He will lead the blind (blinded by their blind idols) who never could find the Way on their own (v16), and the only ones who will be ashamed will be those who refuse to leave their idols (v17).

When You Aren’t Singing the Song (42:18-25) – Maybe you don’t feel like singing or shouting God’s victorious praise. Maybe you don’t see it. Maybe you can’t hear the song (spiritually, in your own heart). Israel, God’s messenger, has become blind and deaf (from such idolatries) and so they see many things “...*but you don’t observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear*” (vv18-20). Jesus said the same thing to unbelieving Israel when He came (Luke 7:31-32). Because of their unbelief, Isaiah speaks of the time when they will find themselves “*snared in holes...in prison houses*” (vv21-22) and it will have been the Lord who did this (vv23-24). Even so, maybe right then when Isaiah spoke it, maybe while they practiced their idolatry over the generations following, maybe while they were in exile, maybe while Jesus came preaching the kingdom of heaven, or maybe while you or I hear the music, the song of salvation and eternal bliss, “...*he did not take it to heart*” (v25).

Verse 24 introduces the age old problem of evil. Who caused these bad things to happen? Any number of answers could be offered. God was not strong enough to defend his people from evil. God did not care or really didn’t exist. God does not mix religion and politics and this was a political activity. God is capricious and arbitrary. But the answer: “*Was it not the LORD?*” This fallen world exists “*for they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law.*” But, for His chosen – it all has its own purpose far greater, far more glorious than we could ever imagine (“psst - you should start to hear ‘the song’ again...”).

The Lyrics of Our Redeemer (43:1-7) – “*But now...*” Paul will use this turnaround phrase in a similar way, for similar purposes - “*But God who is rich in mercy...*” (Eph 2:1-5). Israel had been called by His name (v1). Therefore, He would bring them through another Exodus (v2). He will give the Redeemer (Cyrus as the type) other nations as a ransom for releasing Israel to return home (v3), even other men and people for them (v4). They are not to fear no matter how vast the dispersion, for God will not lose any who were called by His name (vv5-7).

This is obviously a picture of the greater Cyrus, of Jesus the Redeemer Who paid a ransom, not of other men or nations, but of Himself, the perfect sacrifice, for the men and people of all nations. Unbelieving Israel was rejecting Jesus but He spoke of gathering His elect from the nations, from all corners (Luke 13:22-30). There are many ways to try to get to heaven, but only those known by Jesus will get in. He is the only Way.

Redeemed - And so we see that what matters most about you is not what you’ve done but whose you are. For those who are called by His name, discipline and the consequences of sin here are real – but they are not God’s last word on the lives He has redeemed. The cross proves God’s focused attention, love and grace that He would rather send His Son to die than lose a single one of His chosen. And Jesus said, “...*neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand*” (John 10:25-30). You have been called by His name and for His glory.