

Redeeming Love

Isaiah 42.18–43.21

Sermon

Pastors like to say, “Our aim every wk is just to preach the word.” That may be a true enough statement & it certainly is the goal of faithful pastors simply to preach the word wk after wk. But the reality is, faithful pastors, pastors who seek to expound G’s word, are trying to do many things at once: teach peo how to read the B, confront the self-r in their sin, motivate bels to obed. & in fact these goals are not dift from the goal of “just preaching the word,” they are an outgrowth of it. If a pastor is going to “just preach the word,” then that pastor is *ipso facto* going to be trying to teach peo how to read the B, confront the self-r in their sin, motivate bels to obed. Ult goal includes 2ndary goals.

Our text was written by a preacher, the prophet Isaiah, & like a faithful pastor he is giving G’s word to G’s peo. & he exemplifies for us one of those very imp 2ndary goals that every faithful preacher has in back of their mind: **fortification** (“fortify” = to strengthen mentally/physically, esp. in prep for an attack; to shore up defenses, improve one’s pos in light of coming onslaught). A literal onslaught awaited: **Red Cap**. Remember ch. 39: Hezk’s foolish decision to flaunt his wealth to Marduk-Baladan led to Isa’s prediction that Bab would return, not as friend but as enemy. Perh hard to see at that time bc Assyria was big bully on block. But eventually Bab toppled Assyria, then under Nebu made their way west, eventually laying siege to Jeru, capturing king, deporting peo in 586 BC, a little more than a century after Hezk’s death. Isa foresaw what would happen & kept talking about it as if it had already happened: § e.g., 42.22 (*peo plundered, looted, trapped, hidden*), § 42.25 (*violence of war*).

But Isa’s ult concern not phys fortification. Not saying to Hezk & peo of Jeru, “Look! Bab is coming, so we need to build another set of walls

around city, protect water supply, store up provisions bc Nebu is going to keep us from entering/exiting for yrs.” Might recall from earlier sermons that Hezk did these many of these very things, not bc of Bab Cap but bc of Assyria (2Chr 32.27–30). Isa’s concern not w phys fortification but **spir fortification**. When Isa looked ahead to fall of Jeru & deportation of peo, rightly concerned that § destruction of Jeru would have meant destruction of peo’s faith in the L/J/Y: “isn’t this the City of David? aren’t we the chosen peo? didn’t G make us a promise/cov? why has he failed us? & why is he not listening to our cries? does he not see? does he not hear? does he not care?” § *Ergo in time to come* (42.23). Past tenses used throughout to show certainty of what’s coming, like it’s already happened.

One of great resps of faithful pastors: to prepare G’s peo for suffering, to look ahead, foresee danger, & shore up peo’s faith in 1TG ahead of time. Easy to be lulled to sleep in times of ease, but those are very seasons G equips us for times of distress. Our norm: serious about G only when trouble strikes—then we fast & pray, then we scour his word for ans, then we seek help from G’s peo. But times of comparative ease are times when G intends for us to cultivate our faith so that our conf in him is stronger when distress comes. Like a greenhouse: G shields us from wind/rain/storms for a season so that our roots can go deeper, faith can be stronger, better fruit can be produced, before he puts us back out in real world & endure difficulty/distress/suffering.

Which leads us to a very imp q: why must it be this way? Q that peo of Jeru no doubt asked Isa during Hezk’s reign & subsequent gens would have asked while under siege or in exile: why? “why is he not listening to our cries? does he not see? hear? care?” **Oswalt**: “Why has G been so blind to the difficulties of his peo? Why is he so deaf to [our] cries? . . . To all of this the prophet responds explosively: it is not G who has been blind & deaf, it is the peo!” (130). § § vv. 18–20: peo are **deaf & blind**. Nothing wrong w phys faculties, but having eyes do not see, having ears

do not hear. & in a striking irony they were supposed to be G's *msgr* (19), one to proclaim G's glory to nats, share G's word w world. But how can a *msgr* carry a *msg* if they themselves cannot hear? & how can they take that *msg* anywhere if they themselves cannot see? Not that G has failed his end of cov, but peo have failed. Far from display G's glory for world to see, G's peo had obscured G's glory (**obscurification**) by their own sin—whether we're talking about Hezk's boastful pride or his display of human wisdom to protect water supply wo consulting G, or about peo (§ v. 24) *would not follow his G's ways, obey G's law*.

Chief evidence of their failure to bel & obey G: **idolatry**. Ergo 2nd case vs idols (§ § 43.8–13). Essence of idolatry: turning created things into the Creator, treating gifts as if they were the Giver, making good things ult & hanging our lives on them. Ergo worship of sun/rain/fertility. “If we just have you, everything will be fine.” Our society too sophisticated to worship little statues, so we worship power & wealth & pleasure & youth & appearance. What Ezk called “idols of heart” But whether it's a wooden carving or an image on a screen, it's all the same—idolatry. & tragedy was that Isa's audience knew 1TG & still turned to idols, knew the Giver & still worshiped his gifts. § More than that, called to be *his witnesses* (10) to testify to 1TG. But by their idolatry obscured his glory, failed in their mission, stood ready to be judged. Ergo Bab Cap.

& this is precisely pt Isa steps in & offers good news. Remember: goal is to fortify them/shore up their faith/prevent destruction of Jeru from destroying their faith. Goal not to rub noses in their sin—yes, to be honest about their sit, but at the same time to offer hope. That very fact tells you something about G. Not a harsh despot who rules w iron fist, but a G who persists in loving idolators/even his disobd peo. Against backdrop of their sin that his glory shines so bright (**glorification**). § Ergo turn in 43.1 (*but now*). § **Oswalt**: “Not said that they have become more perceptive or more obed, nor is G's salv made cond on their repentance. Isa simply announces that G's peo need not fear” (136).

Why? Bc he will **deliver** them. § Four vbs of v. 1: *created* (uniquely divine), *formed* (more intimate, phys touch, like a potter w clay), *redeemed* (specific term for bringing next-of-kin under one's protection, "making needs of his helpless relative his own" [Motyer, 331]), *summoned by name* (most intimate of all, naming includes relat & purpose). **ESVSB**: "What defines them is not their guilty blindness, but the grace of the One who says, 'You are mine'" (1318).

& if you want to know how deep his love runs, all you have to look at is the **price** G paid to redeem them. vv. 3–4 simply stunning, hadn't given any consideration to 2nd halves of either vs until Bruce Ware at CDG Conference in 2010. § v. 3 should prob be translated w past tense: *I gave Egypt*, ref to exodus. Refers to exodus again in vv. 16–17: in order to redeem Isr had to destroy Isr's enemy. IOW price G paid in order to redeem Isr was Egypt/Cush/Seba. § Ergo v. 4—just as I once gave Egypt/Cush/Seba to redeem you, so *I will give peo in exchange for you*. To deliver you from Bab I will give up Bab to Medes & Persians to have you back. No redemption w/o payment of redemption price.

Quite poss a troubling thought. Tho you may have thought about exodus before, even celebrated G's deliverance of Isr at Red Sea, perh never thought of lives of Egyptians being ransom price G paid in order to redeem Isr. Pill becomes a little easier to swallow when you consider mistreatment Isr suffered at hands of Egyptians/injustices/brutality/slavery. Some kind of punishment certainly seems justified. But what if the ransom price were someone entirely innocent? What if to redeem his peo from judgment they deserved, someone who hadn't done them wrong had to die? Friends, that is exactly what happened, bc however you understand vv. 3–4, they point away from themselves to the ult ransom price G paid to redeem his peo/they point forward to X, § the One *who knew no sin & yet became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of G in him* (2Cor 5.21). As Nick reminded us this summer in his excellent series on 1Peter (§ 1.18–19). Only way G

could deliver sinful peo from justice we deserve & at same time maintain his own justice: have sword of judgment fall on an innocent & willing One in order that the guilty ones may go free.

Ergo G says § *forget former things, do not dwell on past, see I am doing a new thing* (43.18–19). Yes in some ways he is saying, “I redeemed you from Egypt once, but now I’m doing something new—I’m going to redeem you from Bab.” But so much more than that, bc when you look at promises of vv. 5–7, way bigger than Bab Cap §: *bring children from east and gather you from west* (5). Bab was east of Jeru, ergo no one coming from west, § much less north or south (6). Much more than Bab Cap in view. § You know who *your children* are (5)? *my sons from afar & my daughters from ends of earth* (6)? You who bel! He’s talking about us! We are new thing G is doing, something so great in scope that you might as well forget about exodus. Not just redemption of one nat through ransom price of Egypt, but redemption of whole world through ransom price of G’s own S.

So it’s by virtue of our uwX that we enter into this psg too. Countless gens of bels have drawn great comfort from 43.1–7 & they are abs right to do so bc this promise was given to our spir fathers & mothers & passes down to us, the children from east & west & north & south. So you should savor these vss, memorize them, meditate on them. If you do I think it’ll fortify you in three ways (**sanctification**):

§ 1. **Prepares for suffering** (§ v. 2). Doesn’t say “if you pass” but *when you pass*. § Calvin: “The Lord has not redeemed you so that you might enjoy pleasures and luxuries . . . but so that you should be prepared for enduring all kinds of evils.” G didn’t redeem you to spare you from suffering but to equip you to handle it. But we’re surprised by suffering, startled by distress, driven to our knees asking Why? Isa preparing you. Q to ask not Why? but Who? (42.24). Who rules all things? Can you trust him? In view of the cross & by power of Sp, yes, we can trust him.

§ 2. **Assures you of your value** (§ v. 4). I don't typically cry when I translate Hebrew, but tears came to my eyes multiple times when I translated this psg this wk. Hear G's words: *you are precious in my sight, honored in my sight, I love you*. It's the reason X died, bc G so loved the world. But it's more personal than that—bc G so loved you. § Owen: "There is not the meanest, the weakest, the poorest bel on the earth, but X prizes them more than all the world besides. Were our hearts filled much w thoughts of this, it would tend much to our consolation" (217–8). Ergo we know § the promise of v. 2 will hold.

§ 3. **Charts out your purpose** (v. 7). How many times in life have we wondered what we're supposed to do, esp when we suffer? Ill of M's sit: praying, fasting, "G, what do you want me to do?" § v. 7 tells us: you're created for his glory. v. 10: G wants you to *know & bel me & und that I am he*. § Oswalt: "What Isr is called to learn is not merely that God is great or loving or just or powerful, but much more, that he *is*, that there is no nther, that he alone is the one w whom all creation must come to terms. What Isr thought would be a helpful relat on the way to becoming a dominant culture in the ancient world was in fact a tool whereby Reality would lay hold of them in an unyielding way" (147). Friends, not enough for us to argue existence of G of B is rationally consistent, societally beneficial, existentially satisfying. All true, but doesn't go nearly far enough. At root, G simply is & we must come to terms w him. If that's true—if he really is—that changes everything about our lives. His glory is all that matters. Reason my very 1st series of sermons here was on glory of G. Everything else flows from that center, center of all existence. & when you see his glory as truly central, as all that is, then it clarifies what he wants you to do—he wants you to live for his glory. What I told M: "you're doing what he wants you to do, praying, fasting, talking—not just the means, that is the end. You're bringing glory to him." I know there's more to it than that, but there certainly isn't less. & if we don't get that right, who cares about the more? His glory is all that matters. & friends you'll find that when you

live for his glory, when all that matters to you is that X's worth would be seen/known/loved, your joy will be full. Why I pray as I do every week: G's glory & our joy are not two things, but one.

At end of the day there are lots of 2ndary purposes preachers have in mind when they "just preach the word." But reality is, even "just preaching the word" is itself a 2ndary goal. Ult goal: glory of 1TG. § "Glorify your name & we will rejoice." Friends, I don't know what specific suffering G is fortifying you for today. But I do know that it's coming; it always does. & when it does, here's what you need to know: G is. & for you who bel, the G who is is your G.