

Called in Righteousness

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Bible Text: Isaiah 42:5-9

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Turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 42 and I'm going to read from verse 5 down to verse 12 and talk with you about one called in righteousness. Called in righteousness. Here in Isaiah 42, beginning with verse 5,

5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

First thing that we see here in this chapter is a covenant God that has made a commission not with men but with his Son. We saw this in verse 1 in the last message of chapter 42, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect," clearly speaking of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the royal titles by which God makes himself known and distinguishes himself from all pretenders we find set forth here in this particular portion of Scripture, all summed up again in verse 8, "I am the LORD."

How lightly people take the name of the Lord today. They figured out ways to mix it up so it doesn't quite sound as bad: dad gum, you know, is just a different way of saying God damn. People will say cheez or cheez-it instead of taking the name of Christ. They have a little bit of a, I guess a fear of actually saying it but it's still the same. It's a light regard for the name of the Lord and is to be rebuked. It is to be denounced. When you think about

who he is even as we read here in verse 5, not just, "Thus saith God," but "Thus saith God the LORD." Let that thought enter our hearts as to who he is.

Brother Lane read Paul's testimony there on the road to Damascus and here was a man who had been raised in religion, a Pharisee of Pharisees and yet when the Lord was pleased to arrest him there on that way, what was the very first question out of his mouth? "Who are you, Lord?" This thing of knowing Christ and being his is not just changing doctrine or changing denominations. It is changing gods, whereas before I was blind and now I see and such is the cry of every soul that the Lord has ever opened.

So we see him set forth as that covenant God and continuing to describe the commission that he gave to his Son. This is why it's so important for us in reading Scripture not to take it out of context. I know we break it up going through it when we read or as I'm preaching but all of this is tied to that very first declaration in verse 1 of chapter 42, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." That word "Gentiles" means "nations." How is he going to bring forth judgment? That word "judgment" isn't in the sense of condemnation but in the establishing of a righteousness which he himself, God can accept, a holy God. How can he do that but what he be over all nations and that he be able to direct every event and circumstance that takes place in nations to bring to an effectual end what he has purposed.

That's why verse 5 starts off, "Thus saith God the LORD." He is the ruler, first of all, in heaven as you see there in the following portion of that verse, "he that created the heavens, and stretched them out," but he is also the governor of all that takes place on the earth. If he is the one who created the heavens and stretched them out as infinite as this universe is and some say ever growing, what is it then for him in the lower part of the earth where it says there in verse 5, "he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein." Here he is reasoning from greater to lesser. If he has created the universe and the heavens and stretched them forth, what is it for him to govern this little speck that someone likened to a lightbulb in some apartment in New York City, the earth compared to the universe. Imagine a Google map that just pulls out from the world and that representing the universe and then just Google in all the way down to some apartment and not even the apartment but to some little lightbulb in that apartment. That would be the comparison of the earth to the whole universe. Something physical, visual for us to perceive.

How little we think of God. We, again, falsely assume that it's our world that everything else turns around but nothing could be further from the truth. When he shakes our world and turns it upside down, it's to remind us that we live and move and have our being in him just like it says here. He is the one that gives breath unto the people on it and spirit to them that walk therein. That's not just his sheep, his people. He causes it to rain on the just and the unjust. We reason like atheists all the time, "How come it's raining over there but not here?" We somehow find a way to find fault with God even with the temperature. I like it at 78 degrees. How many times have you walked out on a beautiful morning, blue

sky as you think, "Why can't every day be like this?" Well, guess what, the Lord isn't dictating things according to our delights and likes. There's a reason he gives us those 78 degree days and there's reason why in some parts of the world it gets up to 114 degrees in the daytime. I can remember growing up, we had these little metal springs and frames and during siesta time rolled over and happened to touch it, you'd get a little bit of a burn because it was so hot. But the Lord purposes all those things. It's just to say that this world is his, but this is the kind of God who it is that has purposed to condescend to come and to save sinners such as we are rather than send us to hell. That's an amazing thought when you think about that.

But I'd have you note here again in verse 6, the assurances. He's not a God who is far removed. He's not a God who is silent in history as some men think. He is working. He has worked, he is working and he shall work but he does it all through his Son. How many of you when you read verse 6 as I did when I initially started studying this portion and I saw, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness," you started thinking about yourself? Well, here again is a way that if we were left to ourselves, we would completely miss Christ because that's not who he is talking about when he says, "I have called thee in righteousness." The subject is Christ. It goes back to, again, verse 1, "Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I the LORD have called thee." This is a conversation between the Father and the Son and continues to be all the way down through this portion of Scripture. God owns that his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is to be that one to come and to work out a righteousness to his satisfaction.

There are some today and even as recently as yesterday I received an email from an acquaintance who is a preacher, still struggling with this. How can you say that God had his people in Christ from eternity and yet say they weren't justified in eternity? Well, if that were the case, there would be no reason for Christ to come. When I read this, the Lord says, "I have called thee in righteousness," it was necessary that Christ come and that he work out a righteousness to God's satisfaction that God might be just to declare righteous those for whom Christ died. So this is the setting that we see here that we dare not miss.

Notice, it was God who called him to it. This fits very well if you hold your hand here and go over to Hebrews 5:4. When he says, "I have called thee in righteousness," that word "in" can also be translated "according to righteousness or to righteousness." It shows that the justification had not yet taken place. There was a necessary work to be accomplished and it's not that Christ just volunteered, "I'll do it," he was called to it. God the Father had set his favor upon his Son and set him to this work to which Christ submitted. You see in Hebrews 5:4 that it says, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared," notice, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." This was a call in righteousness but it was a

call to a hard service, a hard labor, something that no man could do given a million years, to satisfy a holy God and God said, "My Son will do it. My Son will do it."

You notice in verse 9, "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." So what a great testimony this is. Don't you suppose that if God sets his mind to something and purposes it and sets in order that one who is to accomplish that commission, that it will be done without failure? That's why we look to Christ. We don't look to a man. We don't look to ourselves. But we look to him who was called in righteousness to satisfy a holy God and he came voluntarily offering himself to do this service unto his God on behalf of a people and you look around and you see who is sitting in this room, what a motley group we are, myself included. Who am I that God should ever consider one such as I am and thankfully it's not based upon what I do or you do, it's based upon this one who was called in righteousness.

How difficult of a task was it? The Scriptures use human language to describe the work of the Lord but notice here in verse 6, the Father promised to stand with his Son. Everything that the Son did was in harmony with the Father. There was no disparity between what God purposed and what Christ was doing. He promised to stand by him and even strengthen him. He says, "and will hold thine hand." There are some that speak of Christ being the sin bearer to where God in pouring out his wrath actually had to turn away from his Son. Never. He said, "I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." When it says "a covenant of the people," it's a reference to the Jew and when he says "for a light of the Gentiles," he's talking about the nations.

So right here in the Old Testament was a mystery that was kept from many even though it was clearly set forth in the Scriptures, that this Savior who would come would not be for the Jews only but he would be a covenant for Jew and Gentile. Do you see that? But it would be the Lord who would direct him. Christ even said that. He said, "My Father works hitherto and I work." He did not speak in his own name but what the Father gave him to say he spoke. But it shows to what degree the Lord Jesus Christ condescended. You're talking about an infinite God coming in human flesh and being put to a work in that flesh that would require nothing less than the strengthening of the very God who sent him. Was he God? Absolutely, but in the flesh as a man, he could not lean upon his deity or divinity in any way other than what a man would be called to such as we are and so the Lord did.

You say, "Well, how big of a task was this?" We read it so lightly but you look over in Luke 22:43. We can see backing up to verse 39 what burden our Lord bore, what weight he bore under the burden of sin being put upon him, the just for the unjust. Not sin put in him. He did not bear our depravity. He had to be perfect but he did bear our sin and we dare not read this lightly where it says, "And he came out, and went, as he was wont," verse 39, "to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father,

if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." And notice verse 43, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." He wasn't to die before the cross and yet he was in such a weakened state that even at that moment as a man, the weight of death was heavy upon him.

I don't know as we can ever enter into that. Death is our just due and yet we fight it. We fight it when loved ones are taken or they approach death. Somehow we always feel it's too soon and yet the sentence of death is upon us and yet here is one who did not deserve that sentence of death and yet willingly submitted himself to it that he might satisfy God's law and justice. But all the while, the Father was holding his hand. Holding that hand in love. Holding that hand in strength and in grace. Upholding him as he said he would do and that to me is comforting because if he was faithful unto him who came as my representative, then he's faithful unto me. If Christ did it, it's done. He finished the work. He has accomplished it. Again, what God purposes, he accomplishes.

So we can see how Christ was set to this work. It was a work of righteousness which he was to accomplish. It had not yet been done. You say, "Well, how did God deal with all those then in the Old Testament before Christ came?" In forbearance. David said that in Psalm 32, "Blessed is the man to whom God will not, no never, impute iniquity." God was not imputing their sin to them. He had already purposed it to lay it on his Son but his Son had to come and do the work. This was not done by decree, it was accomplished by death, you see, and so the importance of his work.

We also see the promises to stand by him but as that word says in verse 6, "I give thee for a covenant of the people." You stop and think about what a covenant is, it's an agreement between two parties and a lot of people think that's between God and a sinner. No, he said, "I give thee for a covenant of the people." The people are the beneficiaries. The word "covenant" is like a will. Their names are named in the will but the importance of the will is the death of the testator. Notice here it's not a system of doctrine, "I give thee for a covenant." Here is a transaction that wholly depended upon the Father and the Son being in agreement. God in giving Christ, did so that those that for whom he gave his Son might freely enjoy all the blessings of that covenant.

If you look over in Luke 1:72, here's how we see Scripture confirming Scripture. In Luke 1, again, this was John's father, Zacharias, that was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied. Look in verse 68, this was his song which could be the song of the redeemed. It could be our song if the Lord has so taught us and bought us. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people," that necessary work, "And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," another description of Christ, "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us," and notice here, "To perform the mercy," the mercy, "promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant." To remember what he purposed to do through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we see here that all the blessings, if there's any blessing in a spiritual way to any of us as sinners, it's because the Father established this covenant with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and we are but heirs of him. You say, "What's the blessing?" Well, it gives us two there: one is light, that's the effect of God purposing to save a people in his Son; and one is liberty. If I were to sum up these two verses, it would be that. First of all, for a light to the Gentiles. I know Brother Lane read that in Acts 26 where similar language was used of Paul being set forth as a light to the Gentiles. He was an apostle unto the Gentiles. But all he was doing was taking the message of the light and declaring it among the nations and God being pleased to call out those for whom Christ died. But he is the light. It's like John the Baptist said, "I'm not the light. He is." We dare never set our eyes upon men even the most faithful of preachers and presume that it's because of their walk with the Lord or their actions that people are being converted. That's the way the world reasons. There is only one reason why any of us sitting here has been converted to the Lord and that is because it pleased God to set Christ forth to cause the light of Christ to shine forth in this otherwise darkened heart.

Do I remember the instrument that the Lord used in opening my eyes and ears? Yes, but I can't remember a thing that the man said but I do remember the word. I do remember the portion of Scripture that he was undertaking and endeavoring to set forth and the Lord used his word to open this heart. I'm so thankful that my salvation doesn't hang upon a man except to be the God-man and certainly that's how the Lord has set him forth here described as a light of the Gentiles. In other words, revealing him and teaching his own who he is, opening the blind eyes as it describes there in verse 7. So it takes eyes to see and the light to reveal and when it pleases God to, like Paul said, when it pleased God to reveal Christ in me. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's not in your profession. It's not in your walking an aisle or saying a prayer or even being dunked. Has Christ been made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption that he that glorieth, as it says, let him glory in the Lord. That's one of the blessings. If Christ has been set forth for you as a covenant, then one of those blessings is light. In his time, he is going to reveal himself unto every one that he came to save. There is not going to be one lost for whom he came.

But secondly is the blessing of liberty where we see there in verse 7, "to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Here again to me is proof that none were justified until Christ had finished the work. They were under the law and they were under the condemnation of that law. Even though having been chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, it took Christ to come and to deliver them as prisoners from a prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. The darkness there with reference to perhaps even some of the Old Testament symbols and types that were but shadows as the writer of the Hebrews said, "The law was a shadow of good things to come." It wasn't until Christ had accomplished the work that indeed he took captivity captive, is what the Scriptures say. They were brought. They were reconciled unto God by his blood by his death.

So all of that is designed to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ but in verse 8 and following, we see what assurance we have when the Lord causes us to look to his Son. Verse 8 he says,

"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." As I encounter different ones who call themselves Christians, this is the one thing that I listen for: who are they giving the glory to? If they're talking about having made a profession and walking an aisle and saying a prayer and doing some ceremony, they're not giving the glory to the Lord, they're giving the glory to a graven image. A graven image is nothing more than what men make up in their minds as to how they view God, how they view salvation. To me, this is the distinguishing mark of any that the Lord has done a work in and that is even as God would not give his glory to any other but to his Son, don't you suppose then his Spirit working in those people, that they would give all the glory to his Son as well? That's the mark. That's how the Spirit reveals himself.

And the authority to give life, the authority to give liberty, that's one of the arguments going on today. By what authority does the United States have to go into a foreign country, Pakistan, and do an operation to kill Osama Bin Laden and then get out? Everybody is up in arms about it. By what authority? The people have the same argument with regard to God, "By what authority does God exercise his will to save some and pass by others?" Well, he says the simple answer, "I'm the Lord. I'm the Lord. That is my name and my glory will I not give to another." You give glory to free will, you're giving glory to another. You give glory to another man stating that it was because of that man that you are now the Lord's because of his prayers, you're giving the glory to another. That cannot be. He says, "I will not give my glory to another."

He'll send his Son and he did, to open men's eyes, that they turn from their dumb idols to serve the living God and that is his work to do. Did he do it? Well, if you look there in verse 9, "Behold, the former things are come to pass." He is declaring it as if it were done, looking forward to Christ having finished the work, "and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." When you come over to 2 Corinthians 5:17 and I think we'll come back with verse 10, pick up with it next time, but I want you to see this first. 2 Corinthians 5. How many of us struggled in reading this to understand what it means before the Lord graciously taught us? It says here in verse 17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Has the Lord begun a work of grace in your heart? Do you ever hear of preachers talking about how everything is changed now? "It's like I can hear the birds in the morning now. I can see the blue sky. I can just feel the Spirit in everything." And that goes along for just about a nanosecond and then you realize that person looking in the mirror as far as his own flesh is concerned isn't any different than he was before the Lord began to do a work of grace in his heart. In fact, you see yourself moreso as a sinner than you ever did. All of a sudden there is light like shining the light on your face and you're going and looking in there and thinking, "Whoa! What's that on my face?" It doesn't look so good with light up close. It looks better with the lights dimmed.

In reality, there is nothing that is changed about this flesh. In fact, the Lord continues to teach you that by his Spirit, that as a needy sinner I need him more today than I ever did. You say, "Well, what's changed?" Well, here when he talks about old things that are passed away, just like Isaiah is talking about, "Behold the former things are come to pass

and new things do I declare," he's talking about that law having been satisfied, that condemnation removed, that there now being a genuine reconciliation of God with his people that he covenanted to save in Christ. I say that because verse 18 explains it. The "all things" are what? They're of God "who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." That's what's past. We no longer live under the old. We no longer have to wait in God's forbearance for the accomplishment of these promises.

God has fulfilled it in the Lord Jesus Christ and behold all things have become new there, that it's not in our bringing a lamb, God brought the lamb. God saw to it that that lamb was sacrificed and having done so, behold all things are new. Every spiritual blessing that we have is in the Lord Jesus Christ and accomplished in him and God has so purposed it and that's what he's talking about, "Before they spring forth, I tell you of them." You see, the Old Testament was a Gospel of promise that God would do this through this Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and he caused every one of his for whom he had made that covenant with his Son. He caused to look forward in hope of the accomplishment but now we can say it is the Gospel of the accomplishment. It has been accomplished. It has been fulfilled just as God has said and how great is his mercy and how constant is God's care for his own people. Great is his faithfulness and his mercies are renewed every morning.