

**Isaiah 42:10-25 (NKJV)**

**10 Sing to the LORD a new song, *And* His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!**

**11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*, The villages *that* Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains.**

**12 Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands.**

**13 The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.**

**14 "I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. *Now* I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once.**

**15 I will lay waste the mountains and hills, And dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, And I will dry up the pools.**

**16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them.**

**17 They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, '*You are our gods.*'**

**18 "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see.**

**19 Who *is* blind but My servant, Or deaf as My messenger *whom* I send? Who *is* blind as *he who is* perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant?**

**20 Seeing many things, but you do not observe; Opening the ears, but he does not hear."**

**21 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make *it* honorable.**

**22 But this *is* a people robbed and plundered; All of them are snared in holes, And they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers; For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"**

**23 Who among you will give ear to this? *Who* will listen and hear for the time to come?**

**24 Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law.**

**25 Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger And the**

**strength of battle; It has set him on fire all around, Yet he did not know;  
And it burned him, Yet he did not take *it* to heart.**

If our sermon had a title this morning it would be “From idolatry to worship”. Our context is about God moving people from idolatry to worship. In 41 we saw that the person who chooses to worship an idol over the true God is an abomination. Then we saw the arrival of God’s true servant, Christ. He is the exact opposite of an idol and is worthy of all worship. That leads us to this morning.

What we will see this morning is the salvation of God. And what we will clearly see is the salvation is **by God, for God and through God**. It is His **idea**. It is His **project**. And it will be His **monument**. Humans are the beneficiaries, not the originators of it.

And we will start with the most logical and fitting response when a human being receives the wonderful salvation of God.

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**11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*, The villages *that Kedar inhabits*. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains.**

**12 Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands.**

Sing to the Lord a new song. Does that sound familiar. Psalms implores the same action 3 times. Look how similar what David says is to what Isaiah says.

**Psalm 96:1-5 (NKJV)**

**1 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth.**

**2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.**

**3 Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.**

**4 For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised; He *is* to be feared above all gods.**

**5 For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols, But the LORD made the heavens.**

Right off the bat we notice two words. New and Song. What is the point? Is it that new is always better? I don’t think it is that at all. I think the issue is that a **new song** is **your song**. It is an expression, not of what someone else has experienced. It is your story of God. It is like a new testimony of the goodness of God. It is fresh. It is real. It reflects the wonderful things God is doing right

now. It represents the heart that is enthralled with God now. It isn't that the old songs aren't good. It is just that they are **someone else's** story. A new one is a **fresh appreciation of the person of God**. And that is what we need to have. If God's mercies are new every morning, shouldn't there be some that get our special attention?

I think an application would be that our walk in Christ be new and growing all the time. Our relationship should inspire fresh appreciation all the time. If asked, as Dan Beitzel likes to ask, "What are you learning?" we should always have something to answer. Do you have something you learned about God this week? Do you have a fresh story about the goodness of God this week? If not, why not? If so, tell it.

And as for song, a song may be the purest expression of our feelings, of our awe, of our worship. The truest proof of our worship may be in how we live. But the way we can most energetically **express ourselves to God** is in song. So this is what is to break out in our lives. Some may not be as musically oriented as others, but surely our heart has a fresh enthusiastic expression to God for what He has done for us.

Now, notice who is doing the singing in verses 10-12. When you research it what you find is that Isaiah is referring to Gentile regions. Gentile regions? Aren't they the notorious idol worshippers? Aren't they the wretched heathens that eat pigs and could care less about the Jewish God? Well yeah. Same people. But this is what happens when God works out His salvation. It crosses every barrier. It goes to every people group. It saves every kind of people.

And this is what happens when a person is finally set free from serving the idols that keep demanding more and more of them. This is what happens when people in darkness, for the first time in their lives, see a great light. This is what happens when those who are slaves of sin are finally set free from their evil master and becomes slaves of Christ. They belt out a new song. And they do it from one end of the world to the other. Today there are songs to Christ being sung from one end of our earth to the other. There are believers almost everywhere on the globe. And they are singing their songs with all their hearts because they have been set free from their idol worship. They now worship the one True God who loves them. We have a song we like to sing that says it well.

**We have heard the joyful sound: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!**

**Spread the tidings all around: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!**

**Bear the news to every land, climb the steeps and cross the waves;**

**Onward! 'tis our Lord's command; Jesus saves! Jesus saves!**

Now, this is what **we** are to do. What is it that **God** will do?

**13 The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.**

Now look at this. This is in the context of salvation. It is in the context of the Kingdom of God. Some people act like all there is of God is the Christ that according to 42:3

**3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench;**

It is wonderfully true that this is how people who are struggling with sin, who are grappling with spiritual issues, are treated by Christ. So we should learn from Christ to have compassion with people who are suffering to live as Christ tells us to live. We should have compassion on those who are telling the truth about their lives and the truth is not pretty.

But there is more to God than this. Verse 13 shows us a God who is violent and powerful and awesome. A person is very smart to be afraid of this God. In fact, fearing Him is the very foundation of rational thought.

And look. He isn't just a threat. He is a completely successful threat. He will never have an enemy that he does not totally and absolutely defeat. He will prevail against every single enemy. It is never even in question. Life looks like a struggle against spiritual forces. And for us that is how we are to face life. But we have to understand it is not ultimately and finally like that. Where God is concerned, there is no struggle. Just sheer power to accomplish what God wishes.

So this is what those who cling to idols have to look forward to. Now that is what God will do to His enemies. What will He do for His friends?

**14 "I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once.**

This is God speaking of Himself. He uses imagery to describe His situation. First He talks about holding his peace. This is God biding His time until it is right for Him to move. The Jews had a period of time where God greased the tracks in the direction they wanted to go. They wanted to fall into idolatry, so God let them. He let them have what their hearts wanted. And He waited for that to bear its ugly fruit.

I would bet that every single one of us has experienced the same thing. Maybe we chose a path that we knew was wrong. And really, we expected God to stop us, to do something to get our attention. We expected God to intervene. We expected something bad to happen. But we were surprised that we were actually getting away with it. He seemed to do nothing. But life went on and we began to taste the bad fruit of our labor. Our lives began to unravel. We

began to taste the natural consequences of our sin. Our happiness vanished and we found ourselves hardened and mournful and embarrassed and humiliated. And then God moved. That is what we are seeing here. And while God does this for individuals, this time He was talking about His people. Now, some people's major complaint is that God is not involved enough in this life. Let me ask you. Can you think of any better imagery of **active and committed involvement** in the **birth of a baby** than a pregnant mother? Apart from the use of drugs, I don't think there has ever been a complacent non involved woman in labor. She is not likely to say, ah, maybe I will have this child. Maybe I'll go to Walmart. I don't know....

No, the imagery chosen here is intentional. Our Lord is actively involved and totally committed to the delivery of each of His children. There is nothing more important in His agenda than delivering that next child of God. He isn't going to lose focus or get bored. He is going to deliver His children. Do you ever feel that God is aloof? Well, His word says that He is not. **He is heavily involved and deeply committed.**

We see here that God's grace is more than just some offering being held out to people. **It is that.** But it is **more.** It is highly effective. It is extremely intentional. God has started something that He is going to finish. And the thing that He is finishing is creating for himself, not just someone who will say, yes I will pray a prayer for salvation from Jesus if that will assure me entrance to heaven. No. He is creating a people who **find their all in God.** He will create a people who **must have God above everything else in life.** And He will do whatever is necessary to secure this end, no matter what it costs Him.

**<sup>15</sup> I will lay waste the mountains and hills, And dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, And I will dry up the pools.**

**<sup>16</sup> I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them.**

What we see being displayed here is what it is like when idolaters come to God. We see that God will do everything that is needed to allow their inclusion, even given the deep deficiencies they have. And oh, didn't we have **deficiencies** when we came to Christ? Didn't we think we would serve Him and do everything He said? Didn't we think, like Peter, that our good intentions would carry the day and direct our unfailing loyalty. Only to find out all we ever knew was **how to live by flesh.** And adoring Jesus was not enough to overcome our sinful tendencies. It seemed that the first thing we

did was deny Him in ways we thought we would never do, ways we look back at and cringe.

Look what Christ does for His people here.

There was a cruel joke when I was a kid about entertainment you could find at a blind person's expense. It involved rearranging the furniture and yelling "fire". Well what we see here is the opposite. God pulls out the stops in this imagery to get blind people to their end destination.

He evens out the path making it walkable. He will walk with them and lead them. He will straighten out the path to make it walkable. And He will never leave their presence.

Do you ever look at your life and wonder, God, why will you not get more involved in my trouble. I can think of a night I called out to God in my misery wanting God to do something. And instead of giving any instant relief, He took me through a process. We all want God to respond to our discomfort. And we want Him to respond **now**. But we need to understand something. We cannot use the fact that God does not respond **according to our time table** to assume that **He is not actively involved in the process**. We cannot know the changes He is making that we, in our blindness, cannot see. We do not know how many things He has altered in our path for us to make it in this life. We don't know what curves He has straightened and what obstacles He has removed so blind people could make it to the end of the path.

Many of you are hurting this morning. Some are working through your loss. Some are dealing with medical conditions. Some are struggling with the sin that so easily besets you. We are all in this together. Never assume a person is not suffering any difficulty. Most are. But we can rest in this assurance. God is **actively** working for our good. We sometimes confuse His patience with passivity. That is a mistake. He will do whatever is necessary to get us to the end destination. And He will not fail to do so for everyone who is His. Also there is something else to notice here.

From what I understand, blind people can get very comfortable in familiar circumstances. They know the number of steps from one obstacle to the next. They can carry out their normal lives without much assistance. But that is not the environment described in our text. This environment is a path to an unknown destination. And the only way the destination would be reached is if the blind person was led every step of the way by the maker of the path. I think this is another application. This is how God intends us to live. The Christian life is not intended to be one of constant comfort and familiarity. It is a path to the unknown. And it requires constant trust and reliance upon the one who made and knows the path.

How much do you need to depend upon God? The way you live your life, how much must you depend upon Him for guidance and wisdom? Could we continue to live without God's presence? Would we notice if He pulled his fellowship from us? What would we be missing? What difference would it make? This might be one of those things that are worth jotting on a piece of paper and asking ourselves this week. How much do we really need God to **live out the lives** we have charted for ourselves? Is that how it should be?

**17 They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, 'You are our gods.'**

So the blind will make it. But who won't? The ones who have chosen alternative gods. The ones who have relied upon something other than God and God's word for living life.

Isaiah has hammered this point all along. Now he hammers it again. Let me ask you. What are you afraid of losing in this life? Where do you say, if I were to lose this, I could not make it? Have you considered that maybe that is your idol? In our imagery we have seen that the only thing we need to make it to the end of the path is our Savior's guidance. Now, He knows us better than we know ourselves. And He knows what we need even before we ask. So we can trust that He will provide us with all those things. But if we become anxious imagining or fearing a loss of something else, maybe we should do some business with those thoughts. Maybe we can learn something about our own souls idolatry, where we have become more dependent upon the gifts from God than of God Himself. Have we begun to worship what He has given us more than Him?

Look at the result of false worship. Shame. This is the same word used for what Adam and Eve experienced when they did things their way. It is what people experience when they act unwisely in scripture. It is to experience distress like farmers with no crops. Shame looks for something beneficial but ends up with something detrimental at the end. That is the end result when we look to something other than God to give us what only God can provide. This is no surprise at all. Of course it is a **shame** when we substitute something stupid for God.

**18 "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see.**

**19 Who is blind but My servant, Or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant?**

**20 Seeing many things, but you do not observe; Opening the ears, but he does not hear."**

Now the text shifts attention. There is mention now of a servant, but we know

from the context that it cannot be the same servant spoken of in the first 9 verses. That servant was perfect. No. Verse 24 gives us the clue to the identity of this servant. It is Jacob or Israel. It is God's people.

This is a rebuke of the people of God. Here are the servants of God's servant Jesus. And what are they like? Blind, deaf, yet it is a blindness and deafness by choice. And that is what makes it doubly bad.

**20 Seeing many things, but you do not observe; Opening the ears, but he does not hear."**

It is possible for **ignorance** to be our greatest problem. But that is very very rare. Our greatest problem is usually not that we **do not know what is right or wrong**. Our greatest problem is that **we do not care** what is right or wrong. It is not that we **don't know** what God would prefer we do or think. We simply **don't care** what God prefers. We want what we want more than we want what God wants. God allows us to lie to ourselves if we wish. But if we are to be truly honest with ourselves, this is the problem that has perplexed us from the day we first came to Christ.

Our problem is that we **do** see and we **do** hear but it has no effect on what we **do**. It is no wonder we experience shame. Shame is appropriate when we refuse to submit to what our God has clearly spoken.

**21 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable.**

Do we remember who it was that never sinned, that perfectly kept the law? Yes. Jesus.

And while we need to discern how the Old Testament law applies to today, we know that it still applies. Jesus said as much.

**Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)**

**17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.**

**18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**

**19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

**20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Even now God is not desiring to have a bunch of antinomians having no regard for His law and His authority leading His church. He has given us truth to live



by. What He desires is that a people **who loves God enough to obey Him loves His people the way He describes love.** And as we do this the world doesn't know what to think about it because it is something new to them.

Jesus said

**John 13:34-35 (NKJV)**

**<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

**<sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Isn't that odd. They won't know because we share the gospel. They won't know by our knowledge of theology. They will know we really follow Christ because we will be doing what Christ did. And the most important thing is loving His children. And remember how Jesus described the law. Most important is that we love God. Second is that we love people the way He describes. Christ always exalts the law and makes it honorable.

**<sup>22</sup> But this is a people robbed and plundered; All of them are snared in holes, And they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers; For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"**

**<sup>23</sup> Who among you will give ear to this? *Who* will listen and hear for the time to come?**

**<sup>24</sup> Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law.**

**<sup>25</sup> Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger And the strength of battle; It has set him on fire all around, Yet he did not know; And it burned him, Yet he did not take *it* to heart.**

This is such a sad passage. God allowed His people to be pillaged and plundered. They are hiding for their lives. Things are going awful. Now if this happens to you, what would you guess you should do? The first question any Christian should ask when they face calamity is, why? Have I done something that dishonored my God to the place that God felt the need to discipline me? That is a very legitimate question. Charles Stanley once collapsed right after he had preached a sermon. When he woke up he immediately began searching to find if he had sinned against God. And according to him, God revealed several things that God was disciplining him for.

We are wise to ask the question if things begin falling apart in our lives, God, is this discipline? If so, what for? We cannot begin to think that our God is not big enough to answer such a question.

This is what God's people should have done in our text. But they did not.

**24 Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law.**

We need to remember that our lives are ordered by God. Now I am not trying to say that every bad thing we experience is a discipline from God. But we must start with that question.

Are you facing a hard time? Have you asked God if you are guilty of doing something now that He is disciplining you for? Is there a known sin in your life that you will not let go of? Is He trying to get your attention? We know that God disciplines His children. And we know that if that is His purpose, He will reveal it to His children.

The problem in our text is that His children did not even consider this. They didn't ask the right questions. They didn't want to know. They just wanted to keep doing what they were doing.

God provided all kind of calamity. He takes credit for it. He does not balk. He caused horrendous things to happen. And He plays no games trying to pass off the responsibility to the free will of the wrong doers. No. God will punish rebels. We need to understand that. And He will discipline His children. We need to get that as well.

The tragedy in this case is that they never assigned the credit of what was happening to them to God. They never admitted that it happened to them because they chose idols instead of their God. Verse 25 says yet he did not know, yet he did not take it to heart. How sad. These people suffered great calamity but learned nothing at all by it.

Again, not all adversity is the discipline of God. But it should always be the first question we ask. Lord, is there any sin in me? Please reveal it to me if there is so I can repent of it.

You know, one of the down sides of the strong belief in human-caused global warming is that now it is impossible for God to use the weather to make any point. In the past we attributed weather to a cause greater than us.

Calamities such as we had not seen before might make us to consider what point God might be making. That is no more. Now we become more enraged that we do not have more strict ecological policies because **we** now take credit for that which we used to call acts of God. I am not sure what God could possibly do to us in western civilization to make us ask, God, how have we offended you? What must we do to be saved?

And look at what God got upset about. **For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law.**

If you ever want God's discipline, it is really simple. Disobey Him. Commit

yourself to a path against His will. You will find that God is very active in the lives of His children. He may immediately discipline you. Or He may allow the fruit of your decisions to discipline you. But He will not allow a believer to continue living in a known sin.

We can assume that all of here this morning must struggle against sin. We all have sins we are tempted to do or think. And along with that are the sins of not doing those things we know we should do. Sins of omission and commission. We often go three steps forward and two steps back. And we should help each other in that struggle. But we need to be very alarmed when any of us bail out of that struggle, when we build a wall around our sin. That is a great danger. It is a choice to be deaf and blind. And we find ourselves in the same boat as the people in our text.

So what have we seen this morning? We have seen the lengths that God will do to bring idolators to Himself. We see His loving character. And we see the benefit given to those who love Him and respond to His call.

And as always we see what humans most often do. They have no new song for Christ. They demean or take for granted the Grace of God and the character of Christ. They see their lives as unrelated to anything God is doing. And they suffer for it in one way or another.

May we ask ourselves this week, what would my new song involve? What have I learned about the goodness of Christ lately? What do I really want to tell someone about God's goodness? And do I really believe God is actively involved in my life? Do I act like it? Do I react like it? Is He the center of all that I live for and all that I need?