

Isaiah 43:1-7 | God, Our Protector

Written by John Fox | 9.29.2023

Text: Isaiah 43:1-7

FCF: Fear, Suffering

VFT: Faith, Fortitude

Shaft: Isaiah encourages exiled Israelites in Babylon to remember God will be with them forever.

INTRO

1st Sunday in the Kids Wing!

Before I begin the sermon, we did it! This is our first Sunday back in the Kids Wing and we couldn't have done it on the timeline we did without so much volunteer help. A special thank you to the staff pushing extra hours and key volunteers to make it in the building this Sunday. There's still some things we need to do to make it 'home' but we'll be doing that over the next few weeks. Additionally, we are still slated to have the upstairs kitchen and bathrooms done for the Family Gathering on November 12. I'm so proud and grateful for our church and deeply believe these building updates will enable us to be hospitable and minister to the community God has placed us in.

Love Letters

If you are new with us this morning we have been in a sermon series through the book of Isaiah. Much of the book has focused on the unfaithfulness of God's people, the ensuing judgment, and now comfort and home in the second half of the book. And as we will see, there are some incredibly sweet passages, love letters really.

Today we turn to one of the sweetest passages in the Old Testament, Isaiah 43.

Main Point

Main Point: Nothing will come between God and his people.

Points: Why? Three Reasons:

1. God crafted his people for himself (v.1,7)
2. God will be with his people in their suffering (v.2, 5,6)
3. God will pay any price for his people (v.3-4)

1. God crafted his people for himself (v.1,7)

Isaiah 43:1

Now this is what the Lord says—
the one who created you, Jacob,
and the one who formed you, Israel—
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name; you are mine.

1) Jacob, Israel

It's easy for us to pass over, but by calling his people “Jacob and Israel” God is using the language of first love. If you are married or ever been in love you know what this is- those early days when you were smitten with each other and couldn't get enough of each other.

EXAMPLE | John & Andrea Dating in College

My wife and I went to two different colleges in inner city Houston. She went to HBU (Houston Baptist University) and I went to CBS (The College of Biblical Studies). If you didn't know, Houston is HUGE and I spent about 6 hours a day driving for work and night classes. But I would still fit in any time I could with her: seeing her on campus, having dinner together, talking on the phone, skyping.

Things are different these days. I still love my wife, and the love is deeper, more sacrificial. But there's something very special about those early days of romance. In some ways they provide an ongoing sense of stability. I believe that's the way God begins talking tenderly to his people, his bride, through Isaiah as they are in captivity.

2) God created (crafted) his people for his glory

Moreover, the romance is intensified by the intention God expresses in creating his people. In verse 1 and 7 God says that he both “created” and “formed” his people. This is a straight biblical allusion back to Genesis 2:7 where God got down on the ground and crafted Adam and breathed life into him.

Genesis 2:7

7 Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

The interesting thing about this allusion is that it is referring to Adam and Eve, which often stand in for all of humanity. But here God is speaking of his **special people**. We know this because the mirror image of verse 1 is verse 7 which tells us that the people who bear his **name** are created for his glory in a special sense.

Isaiah 43:7

7 everyone who bears my name
and is created for my glory.
I have formed them; indeed, I have made them.”

What this tells us is that nothing will come between God and his people because he has crafted them for himself. There are strong overtones of the doctrine of election here. But more on that in a bit.

Think about this: You are not an accident. You are not worthless. You are not purposeless. God crafted your individual makeup, personality, and all the hidden aspects of your person you will discover. This is true of all people everywhere. But even more so for believers in Jesus. The reason for your existence is to experience this special love of God and glorify him for it. You are his, his you are.

2. God will be with his people in their suffering (v.2, 5-6)

Isaiah 43:2

2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you,
and the rivers will not overwhelm you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be scorched,
and the flame will not burn you.

This passage also tells us that God is present with his people in their suffering.

1) Water & Fire

Again, the language of water and fire should signal some important biblical stories for us. Generally they relate to judgment and suffering in the bible, i.e. the destruction of the earth in the flood ([Genesis 6-8](#)) and the ensuing destruction of all things with a great fire ([2 Peter 3:10,11](#)).

But water and fire are also used for **cleansing** and **purification** ([Numbers 31:23](#)). All of these and more would have been examples that would have encouraged the Israelites to think about God's faithfulness to them. But perhaps the most provocative and timely episode would have been with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ([Daniel 3:16-28](#)).

Nearly 150 years after Isaiah would write this passage the Kingdom of Judah would be sent into exile in Babylon. During this time King Nebuchadnezzar threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a massive bonfire for not bowing down to worship him. What he saw shook him to the core.

Suddenly he saw there were 4 men in the fire, not 3. This is, in all likelihood, a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, with his people, in their suffering. “When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,” was literal in this instance.

And the Bible is filled with similar stories. We could talk of Jesus:

- wrestling with Jacob in the wilderness
- standing with Joshua before the battle of Jericho
- speaking with Moses and the elders on Mt. Sinai

2) The Indwelling Holy Spirit

But there is a major difference from the Old Testament to the New Testament. God was undoubtedly “with” his people, but it was by sense of proximity to the Tabernacle, Arc of the Covenant, or Temple. But in the opening pages of Acts we see believers in Jesus receive an indwelling of the Holy Spirit that is signified by tongues of flame at Pentecost that rest on them (Acts 2:3).

And the thing Peter couldn’t get his head around until God spelled it out for him was that this indwelling was for all of God’s elect, which are from every language, tribe, and nation. As verses 5-6 tells us.

Isaiah 43:5-6

5 Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your descendants from the east,
and gather you from the west.
6 I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’
and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back!’
Bring my sons from far away,
and my daughters from the ends of the earth—

What does all this mean?

As a believer in Jesus, you are never alone. Whatever pain, sorrow, sickness, or loss you experience, God is with you, in the midst of it. Not only that, they serve to purify us as well. Let me be clear: God’s people are not **exempt** from suffering, but God will be with them in it.

What did Peter write to the early Christians?

1 Peter 4:12-13

12 Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the **fiery ordeal** comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.

Anyone can and will suffer. Christians, even, will suffer. But those who learn to rely on God in the midst of the suffering are the ones who become more like him. Believer, the Lord desires to purify and mature you. Will you embrace what he has for you?

3. God will pay any price for his people (v.3-4)

Isaiah 43:3-4

3 For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, and your Savior.
I have given Egypt as a ransom for you,
Cush and Seba in your place.
4 Because you are precious in my sight
and honored, and I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you
and nations instead of your life.

Now, you may be wondering why I haven't gone through this passage in a sequential way, v.1-7. That's because in Hebrew it's easier to see that this passage forms a Chiasm.

1) Chiasmus

Chiasmus Example

A Chiasmus is a sequence of elements of a sentence or verse, paragraph, chapter or even book which are then repeated and developed – but in reverse order.¹ Example, Genesis 9:6.

(A) Whoever sheds
 (B) the blood
 (C) of man
 (C') by man
 (B') shall his blood
(A') be shed

In addition to being good memory devices, Chiasmus gives us an indication of the author's main point. In this case, we could say that the emphasis of this whole passage is on what God has given and will give. Example mine:²

Chiasmus Isaiah 43:1-7

(A) The Lord and the people he redeemed (1)

¹<https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/explanatory-notes/#:~:text=Chiasmus%20refers%20to%20a%20sequence,not%20man%20for%20the%20sabbath>".

² Inspired by: Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*. Pg. 333.

- (B) The Lord with his people in water and fire (2)
- (C) What the lord gave for his people (3)
- (C') What the Lord will give for his people (4)
- (B') The Lord with his people scattered (5-6)
- (A') The Lord and the people created for his glory (7)

Let me help you out.

2) Will Give

God will let nothing stand between him and his people. He has crafted his people for himself and he will be with them in their sufferings and turn them to good. But those truths don't always move my heart. What moves my heart is to see some demonstration of love that is costly.

The example that God gave in the past to show his great love for his people is based in the Exodus out of Egypt. The only way for God's people (Israel) to escape the bondage of slavery in Egypt was for a price to be paid. Pharaoh had a death grip on Israel and only let go at the cost of his army, economy, and first born sons of Egypt.

God indeed had to give up the lives of the Egyptians so that his people could go free. More importantly, the night of the passover the Passover Lamb was slaughtered and its blood marked the entrance to the Israelite's houses so that they would be spared.

But that is what God gave. God also says that he will give anything. In the gospel we see that God paid the ultimate price in the crucifixion of Jesus for his people. The verse we all know comes to mind...

John 3:16

16 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Church, when you doubt God's love for you, immerse yourself in the truth of the gospel. There was no distinguishing trait that separated the Israelites from the Egyptians other than God's choice and love. Likewise, there is nothing we contribute to God's choice of love for us as believers in Jesus. This also means that no one is forcing God to love you. Rest in his free love for you that will ensure nothing comes between him and his people.

CONCLUSION

Main Point: Nothing will come between God and his people.