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Sermon Notes

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## **God Glorifies Himself by Working a New Salvation**

**Isaiah 43:1-28**

### **How awesome was the Red Sea crossing!**

Perhaps the most spectacular miracle God ever did... for SHEER SPECTACLE, what could be more amazing than the crossing of 2-3 million people on dry land through the middle of a Sea, with the water walling up on the right and on the left?

When I preached through Exodus years ago, I calculated the amount of force God would have had to hold up on the left and right if the crossing he been 11 miles and the water 250 feet deep... 226 billion pounds of force! But the water may have been far deeper than that...

In this chapter, Isaiah the prophet speaks of something so amazing that God is going to do, it will vastly surpass the Red Sea crossing; the new work is so astonishing that it will have the power to drive that Red Sea crossing from our minds... to make us forget it completely because of the surpassing greatness of the new work that God is doing

So he says in verses 16-19:

***Isaiah 43:16-19 This is what the LORD says-- he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup> who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: <sup>18</sup> "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. <sup>19</sup> See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.***

Many commentators on Isaiah 43 say that God is referring to the restoration of the Jews from exile in Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple... but there is no way that that small migration of 42,000 Jews under Ezra equaled the Exodus...

No... the new wonder that God is working is nothing less than our full salvation from sin purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross

Therefore, we can take the incredibly encouraging verses in this chapter as personal messages to us as Christians... it was not written just for the Jews in time of the exile:

***Isaiah 43:1-2 But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.***

This is a word of encouragement to us as 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, whatever the fire or the water that we are going through... God will be with us and we will survive and be purified by these sufferings

**Main Idea:** God displays his glory by rescuing his chosen people through the fire and water of his judgments, a rescue which he predicted ahead of time, and which is greater than the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Because of both the prediction and rescue, God is clearly unlike the lifeless gods of the nations, and his rescued people must stop wearying him with their sins and must instead proclaim his glory to the nations. Though the immediate context of this chapter is God's restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land after the Exile to Babylon, yet the language soars beyond that small occurrence to encompass the worldwide salvation of the elect through Christ.

## I. God Glorified by Rescuing His Children through Fire and Water (vs. 1-7)

### A. God Claims His Children as His Own (vs. 1)

***Isaiah 43:1 But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.***

1. It would have been so easy for Israel to feel forsaken by the Lord when He exiled them to Babylon
2. But in this marvelous section of Isaiah, God reaffirms in plain language His unquenchable love for His people
3. That includes all Gentiles who have trusted in Christ... these words transcend the immediate circumstances of the Exile and the Restoration... God is speaking these words to EVERY GENERATION of His people
4. God claims us as HIS OWN...

5. On what basis? Three... I HAVE CREATED YOU and I HAVE REDEEMED YOU, I HAVE SUMMONED (called) YOU BY NAME
  - a. God created the Jewish nation out of nothing by promising Abraham that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars of the night sky, and then giving to a childless couple, Abraham and Sarah, a miracle baby named Isaac
  - b. Beyond that, God created every single one of His children by knitting them together in their mother's womb
  - c. AND BEYOND THAT, God redeemed us by the blood of Jesus Christ
  - d. And God has CALLED US INDIVIDUALLY by the Holy Spirit into personal faith in Christ

***John 10:3 He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.***

6. The claim: YOU ARE MINE!!
  - a. This is the ownership the Lord feels for us... we are His precious possession, the apple of His eye
  - b. He made us, shed his blood for us, summoned us and now owns us!

B. God Promises Protection for His Children through the Fire and Water (vs. 2)

***Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.***

1. The "waters" and the "fire" are metaphors for extremely trying circumstances
2. Immediate context again: the Exile to Babylon
3. BUT God does speak to every generation of his people in this chapter as we've seen!!
4. In the Bible, water and fire are BOTH used by God for two things...
  - a. First, the just wrath of God against sinners, destroying them completely
    - i) The waters of the flood of Noah destroyed the world at that time—the waters represented the wrath of God against their wickedness
    - ii) The fire of Sodom and Gomorrah represents God's just wrath against the sins of those cities... of course the ultimate fire is that of hell, the final just judgment of God for sin

***2 Peter 3:6-7 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. <sup>7</sup> By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.***

But the precious children of God do not suffer the wrath of God for sin! Christ's death has freed us forever from condemnation...

b. SO in the Bible, water and fire are also used as images of PURIFYING from sin

***Numbers 31:22-23 Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead <sup>23</sup> and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water.***

***1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.***

***1 Peter 1:6-7 now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

God uses the trials of earth to purify us from sin... to cause us to repent, to see our self-reliance, our idolatries, our weakness and selfishness and lust and corruption... but in the FIRE and WATER of earthly trials we are little by little purified from our sins

And God knows exactly how long to leave us in the fire and the water!

And God NEVER LEAVES US

c. Notice then the inevitability of these purifying trials: "WHEN you pass the waters... WHEN you pass through the rivers... WHEN you walk through the fire..." this WILL MOST CERTAINLY happen to each of us

d. Notice also that we are GUARANTEED to make it through each of these... the waters will not drown us, the rivers will not sweep us away, the fire will not consume us... we will survive each of these and be brought safely into God's heavenly kingdom

e. Notice finally that God promises to be WITH US as we do... the promise of FELLOWSHIP with God is the sweetest of all in the midst of these trials...

5. Application to FBC: a few years of remarkable trials

one of us had a close relative commit suicide; another had a close friend do the same; at least five people have faced life threatening cancer; some have battled clinical depression; some have been consistently lonely and disappointed in relationships; some have been bereaved through the loss of spouses or godly parents; some parents have faced the bitterness of realizing that their grown children are not walking with the Lord and it is breaking your hearts; some have been sorely tried through unemployment; some have had their lives pushed to the edge by caring for a severely needy child or parent... we could go on and on

WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU!

WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL NOT BE CONSUMED!

Christian hymn:

"How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord"

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,  
For I will be with thee, thy trials to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

C. God Gives Up the Non-Elect for the Sake of His Elect (vs. 3-4)

***Isaiah 43:3-4 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. <sup>4</sup> Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life.***

1. Here the Lord extends His words of comfort to His elect children—the Jews in Exile, yes, but also Christians in every generation
2. Now we stare into the depths of God's sovereign purpose of election... God does not treat every person alike... God gives up some people to benefit His

chosen people... He gives Egypt for Israel's ransom; he gives Cush and Seba instead of His chosen people

3. He does this because of His electing love: because his children are PRECIOUS and HONORED in His sight... because He loves them, He gives people in their place, in exchange for their lives
4. Obviously the ultimate exchange God made was crushing His only begotten Son instead of His elect children; pouring out His wrath on Jesus so we could go free!
5. But at a lower level, in everyday life and in the course of Redemptive History, he exchanges the NON-ELECT for the ELECT... He allows the sinners of Egypt to die on the shores of the Red Sea to allow the sinners among Israel to go free; in the days of King Asa, God slaughtered the vast army of Cush and Seba and saved his own people instead; in the days of Hezekiah, God slaughtered 185,000 Assyrian troops to protect the remnant of the Jews
6. At the deepest level, God creates the NON-ELECT and gives them up to his judgment to teach the ELECT the scope of His mercy:

***Romans 9:22-24 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup> What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- <sup>24</sup> even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?***

God gives up the vessels of wrath so that He can teach the vessels of mercy the riches of His glory and power... we see the wrath poured out on other people and realize that we deserved it and that we were saved by grace!

God gives men in exchange for us and people in exchange for our salvation!

The full depths of this mystery we will not comprehend even throughout eternity... the unconditional electing love of God for us, His sinful children

D. God Glorified by Calling His Children from the Ends of the Earth (vs. 5-7)

***Isaiah 43:5-7 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. <sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth-- <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."***

1. God has already said "I have called you by name... you are mine"

2. Now he speaks of the ASSEMBLING of His holy nation before Him that they may be for the praise of His glory
3. Immediate context: the gathering of the scattered Jews from the exile under Assyria and again under Babylon... now they can RETURN to the Promised Land... He will command the four points of the compass to give them up!
  - a. He will gather His children from the east and the west; he will command the north "GIVE THEM UP...!" He will command the south, "DO NOT HINDER THEM..."
  - b. So the Jews of the diaspora, scattered by the Gentile powers of Assyria and Babylon, will now be able to return and repopulate the Promised Land
  - c. But the words go far beyond this!
  - d. It extends to the gathering of the elect from every tribe and nation on earth... gathered to Christ
  - e. The human race has been SCATTERED to the four winds, far from God, by sin... Jesus Christ entered the world to gather them back to God

***Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.***

***John 11:51-52 Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, <sup>52</sup> and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.***

#### 4. CREATED FOR HIS GLORY:

***Vs. 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made***

- a. The best verse in the Bible to answer the question "Why do I exist?"
- b. We were created FOR THE GLORY OF GOD!
- c. We were also redeemed and gathered to Christ to glorify God as well

***Ephesians 1:4-6 In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace***

***Ephesians 1:12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.***

## II. God's People Are His Witnesses That There Is No Other God (vs. 8-15)

### A. God Puts the "Gods" on Trial... Again (vs. 8-9)

***Isaiah 43:8-9 Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.  
<sup>9</sup> All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. Which of them foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things? Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, "It is true."***

1. God summons the idolaters to come out... they have physical eyes but are spiritually blind; they have physical ears but are spiritually deaf
2. As the whole world is assembled, God challenges the idols again, saying which of them foretold the destruction of Babylon and the restoration of the Jews?
3. NONE OF THEM! God alone is the true God who proclaimed the future and then made it happen

### B. God's People Are God's Witnesses: There is No Other God (vs. 10-13)

***Isaiah 43:10-13 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. <sup>11</sup> I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. <sup>12</sup> I have revealed and saved and proclaimed-- I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God. <sup>13</sup> Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"***

1. In this world full of idols, God calls on his chosen people to be His witnesses to declare His unique glory to the world of spiritually blind and dead people
2. The topic is clear: God alone is God... there was no god formed before Him, nor will there ever be one after Him
3. He is the only one who revealed and saved and proclaimed... God has spoken through the prophets and acted in history... He is the only God
4. Israel was called on to be God's servant AND God's witnesses in this darkened earth; BUT FIRST they had to believe these things themselves before they could proclaim them!
5. More than that God alone exists, that God alone reveals/saves/proclaims... His people are to see His terrifying power to judge the sinners of the earth: WHEN GOD SEIZES AN ENEMY, who can rescue that enemy from God's hand? When God acts, WHO CAN REVERSE IT???
6. Such a God must be feared, loved, trusted, embraced! There is no other!

### C. God Will Redeem Israel by Destroying Babylon (vs. 14-15)

***Isaiah 43:14-15 This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians, in the ships in which they took pride. <sup>15</sup> I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King."***

1. God again speaks of His work of REDEEMING Israel... buying Israel out of bondage in Babylon as He early bought them out of the slavery of Egypt
2. Here, He speaks specifically of God crushing the Babylonians through Cyrus the Great and the Medo-Persian army...
3. Because of that invasion and conquest, the Babylonians will FLEE from their citadel—the mighty fortress of Babylon—in ships down the Euphrates River to the Persian Gulf; those ships used to bring them gold and goods for trade from the ends of the earth; now they will flee in them, running for their lives!

### III. God Works a New Salvation Greater Than the Old (vs. 16-21)

This section is the interpretive key for us as 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians... how can I know that the marvelous promises of this chapter are for me as a Christian? Maybe all that God has in mind is the restoration of the Jews from Exile in Babylon?

NO... God says He is working a new salvation GREATER THAN what He worked at the Red Sea

So, he does a fascinating TWO-STEP: 1) Remember the past...how awesome God was at the Red Sea? 2) Now... forget the past! God is doing something EVEN BETTER... more powerful, more surprising

#### A. Remember the Past: God Saved Israel at the Red Sea (vs. 16-17)

***Isaiah 43:16-17 This is what the LORD says-- he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup> who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:***

1. A clear reference to the Red Sea crossing, the culmination of the mighty action of God in the Exodus from Egypt... the amazing ten plagues, then the Israelite nation trapped by the enraged Pharaoh and his awesome army... pinned up against the Red Sea
2. God MADE A WAY through the Sea, a PATH through the MIGHTY WATERS... the water walled up on the left and the right, and Israel, 2-3 million strong, passed through on dry ground

3. Pharaoh's army, held back by the pillar of fire and cloud, were allowed finally to pursue the Israelites into the Red Sea... But then, their chariot wheels began to come off... suddenly, too late, they realized the truth: "The Lord is fighting for the Israelites against Egypt!"
4. The water came crashing down and they lay there, drowned, snuffed out like a wick!!
5. REMEMBER THAT, O ISRAEL? Now, forget it!!!

B. Forget the Past! This New Salvation Will Be Even Greater (vs. 18-19)

***Isaiah 43:18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. <sup>19</sup> See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"***

1. The salvation God is doing now is far greater!! Far more glorious!!
2. It is so great, it can drive the thought of the Red Sea crossing out of your mind!
3. Friends, that is exactly why this chapter MUST be speaking about far more than the return of Israel from the Exile
4. That return from the Exile was in every way smaller than the Exodus
  - a. Only 42,000 Jews returned; when they got there, they found Jerusalem to be a rubble-filled wasteland; the few Jews that were willing to live in Jerusalem were in constant danger because there was no city wall;
  - b. Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the city wall and the temple; but the temple was so unimpressive compared to the Temple of Solomon, the people WEPT ALOUD when they saw it
  - c. The prophet Zechariah had to urge the people not to despise the day of "small things" (Zech. 4:10)
5. So what could be SO GREAT as to make the Exodus forgettable by comparison?

C. God Will Make a Way in the Desert and Streams for His People (vs. 19-21)

***Isaiah 43:19-21 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. <sup>20</sup> The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, <sup>21</sup> the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.***

1. God is doing a NEW THING... making a way in the desert...
2. This is a NEW EXODUS, greater than the first one

3. It will result in praise for God from His chosen and saved people
4. This can be nothing less than the salvation worked by Jesus Christ! Jesus works a new Exodus, a way from the wasteland of sin and a cursed earth to the Father—to the New Heaven and New Earth!
5. That is the only thing that can eclipse the Red Sea crossing!! And it is INFINITELY GREATER! The Jews who crossed the Red Sea, most of them died in the desert; but the elect for who Jesus shed His blood will live forever!
6. So, the immediate fulfillment is the parade of Jews from Babylon back to the Promised Land... but that was just setting the table for the work of Christ
7. That is why is take a SPIRITUAL VIEW of Isaiah 43... and take these promises as being made to God's children in EVERY GENERATION!!

#### IV. God's People Weary Him with their Sins (vs. 22-28)

##### A. God's People Have Not Wearyed themselves in Serving God (vs. 22-23)

***Isaiah 43:22-23 "Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearyed yourselves for me, O Israel. <sup>23</sup> You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearyed you with demands for incense.***

1. Despite the magnitude of this amazing work of salvation, God is grieved at the ongoing weakness of Israel's piety... the ongoing weakness of their love for God
2. They have NOT CALLED UPON God ... they have not wearyed themselves for Him... they have not brought Him costly sacrifices, or honored Him with the level of their devotion
3. They will SACRIFICE VERY LITTLE for this amazing God who is working an incredible salvation for them
4. God did not weary them with demands for sacrifice during the years they were in Babylon... they did not have to follow the Laws of Moses...

##### B. God's People Have Wearyed God by their Sins (vs. 24)

***Isaiah 43:24 You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearyed me with your offenses.***

1. Our sins WEARY a God who says He never gets weary!!
2. God gets burdened with our sins... our sins GRIEVE Him

C. God Has Covered His People's Many Sins for His Own Sake (vs. 25-28)

***Isaiah 43:25-28 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. <sup>26</sup> Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence. <sup>27</sup> Your first father sinned; your spokesmen rebelled against me. <sup>28</sup> So I will disgrace the dignitaries of your temple, and I will consign Jacob to destruction and Israel to scorn.***

1. God forgives us for HIS OWN SAKE!!!
2. For the glory of His own name, God forgives our sins! God does everything for His own glory!!!
3. The “blots out” language = forgiveness; striking out the record of our sins
4. Like the earlier statement about forgetting the past, God actually does not forget our sins, or He would cease to be omniscient
5. But God does not treat us according to our sins; He remembers SOMETHING GREATER... namely, the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf
6. So, God urges his people to REVIEW THE PAST, to go over the sad record of Israel's history of sin... their FIRST FATHER sinned (perhaps Abraham, who was a moon-worshipping idolater in Babylon) or obviously Adam, who sinned in the Garden of Eden
7. Beyond this, even Israel's PROPHETS sinned as well—Israel's teachers, mediators... the best Israel had to offer sinned against Him
8. God wants them to REVIEW THE HISTORY with Him
9. Why does God do this? Remember that, when Isaiah first spoke these words to Judah and Jerusalem, it was in the days of Hezekiah... they may have not understood why God was going to send them into Exile in Babylon; perhaps even after the Exile had occurred, they would forget the track record of sin that led to that punishment
10. THE EXILE was God's JUST and MERCIFUL PUNISHMENT on Israel for their many many sins, their long track record of wickedness against Him
11. Even today, after the Holocaust, I wonder if the Jews would be willing to review the track record of sins that led to the Exile and them losing their Promised Land... it's as though the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wiped out any memory of the nation's sins against God
12. But God made it plain that the reason for the destruction of the Temple was the long history of sin

## V. Applications

### A. The Greatest Display of the Glory of God is in the Cross of Christ

1. It is the Exodus that is so great that the original Exodus and Red Sea Crossing should be forgotten by comparison
2. Trust in Christ!! Repent of your sins... your idolatries
3. Review the past with God... don't you have a track record of sins like Israel did?
4. Isn't it true that all of us have wearied God with our sins??
5. We must have the forgiveness God has worked
6. Verse 25: He BLOTS OUT OUR SINS FOR HIS OWN SAKE!!! He remembers our sins no more! Cling to that through faith in Christ
7. If not, understand that NO ONE CAN DELIVER out of God's hand but God Himself

The wisest way for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians to begin to apply this marvelous chapter is to take the advice given in verse 18: "Do not remember the past events, pay no attention to things of old." As we said above, this doesn't mean to disregard past successes in redemptive history entirely. But many commentators on Isaiah 43 focus exclusively on the "author's original intent" (the author being Isaiah), and speak only about the restoration of the Jews in the Promised Land after the Exile. But the chapter points to a far greater achievement by God than this. As we said above, the regathering of the Jews to Jerusalem in response to the edict of Cyrus was a signal moment in the plan of God, but by far the greater redemption was achieved by Jesus Christ at the cross, and by the Holy Spirit in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. Therefore, while we Christians can respect the original setting for this chapter, within it we see clues that God meant to speak to every generation of his chosen people a word of great encouragement.

So, we should begin by personally treasuring the words God speaks to his chosen people in verses 1-7. We should hold up each phrase like a rare gemstone and press them to our hearts in delight. We should bask in the electing love of God, that God has both created us and redeemed us for his glory. We should feel the intense power of God's cry, "I have called you by name; you are mine!" We should heed his command not to fear the fire or the water, realizing that God does not mean to condemn us by them, but rather to purify us. We should memorize verse 2 for the next

“fiery ordeal” (1 Peter 4:12) God chooses to bring us through, and say those words to our souls when the fire of the ordeal seems to burn our earthly hopes to ashes. Perhaps we have heard the worst possible result from the cancer test; perhaps that same has happened to our spouse; perhaps we have to attend the funeral for our toddler this afternoon, and our hearts are screaming to an sullen sky for some reason why; perhaps we have been unemployed for three months, and no prospects are on the horizon; perhaps we are elderly, in an assisted living center, and no one ever seems to call. Whatever the fire or water through which we are passing, we should cling to the faith and hope Isaiah 43 was originally composed to give: God cherishes us and is working our salvation out for us.

So also we should embrace the challenge in the chapter to be God’s witnesses in an idol-saturated world. We should prove to the idolaters that only the God of the Bible has “declared, saved, and proclaimed.” (vs. 12) We should learn to marshal the evidence of fulfilled prophecies to prove that God is alone powerful over human history. There are no fulfilled prophecies in any other world religion.

Next, we should delight in the great salvation Christ has worked over our enemies, far greater than what he did in Moses’ day at the Red Sea. We should realize that the sins and accusing demons that pursued us hotly have been swept away (vs. 25) by the blood of Christ for the sake of Almighty God. We should swim in the sea of total forgiveness, knowing that God has willfully forgotten all of our sins in comparison with the grace won for us at the cross.

Finally, we should humble ourselves before the clear indications of sovereign grace in this chapter. We should realize that there was nothing within us that compelled God to choose us; it was merely because he loved us that we are precious in his sight. (vs. 4) We should realize that God does all of this mighty work on our behalf for his own sake, for his own glory. We were created for his glory (vs. 7), and redeemed to praise his glory. (vs. 21) We should realize that we will spend eternity in heaven declaring his praise, so we should do so now on earth, no matter what fire or water his wisdom and love chooses to draw us through.