

# Our Only Saviour

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Date: 04 July 2021

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if you have a Bible open, would you please open it at Isaiah chapter 43? Today I want to look through this passage with you. This is an exciting day for Bon Accord Free Church.

If all goes well, and we hope that it does all go well, then you'll be looking forward to a new ministry starting in the next few months. That is exciting. So, it's perhaps a little bit strange that I come with a message from Isaiah chapter 43. It's a little bit weird in a way. It's got great stuff in the middle, but let's just remember what's on the outside of it. It's a warning.

It's a warning to God's people that they're going to be exiled. It's a warning of God's wrath coming, and it tells us that even though this is going to happen, God is going to be with His people.

It calls the people to remember who He is and to call out to Him. But at the end of the chapter, it comes again. It's a warning. Bad things are going to happen. So, just in case, we need to clear it up before we start. I don't think that the way we're progressing today, I hope that bad things are not going to happen. If there's going to be anybody exiled, well, I think it's more likely to be somebody coming to minister amongst you because that's what seemed to happen to Samuel Rutherford a long time ago, going through a good ministry, sent to Aberdeen to prison, it was like. So, hopefully, not bad things are going to happen to you, but good things are going to happen for a minister and for a congregation. And what I want to do today is not to focus so much on the warning, although we have to heed it, but to look at the bits in the middle and to see what God is like, to remind you of the character and of the love of God, and to help you to focus on Him, praying that God would bless it, and that as we think of what God is like, that you would be encouraged, that you would all have something to take home with you from these words in Isaiah chapter 43. But I do want to call your attention, just if you have your Bibles open, look at Isaiah 42, and just set the context. God is saying that He would pour out on them His burning anger.

And then we're told at the start of Isaiah 43, fear not, don't be afraid. And then at the end of chapter 43, it says, God, disgrace the dignitaries of your temple. I consign Jacob to destruction and Israel to scorn. Isaiah 44 starts, do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

[ 3 : 0 4 ] That in this word of trouble coming, God would be with His people. And so, you might think, just to clarify, is God having a little bit of a, I'm not sure what to do with these people today? Is He confused?

Is He keeping on changing His mind? No, it's not like that. I showed you the puppy. I promised the sermon's not going to be all about puppies, because what I can't bear is people coming and tell me how to look after a puppy, because everybody has lots of different ideas of how to do it. So, let me go my own way. But what happens with this puppy is I talk to it. And I say, you're going to go to puppy prison if you don't behave. And sometimes he behaves, and then other times he doesn't behave. And I put him in puppy prison, which is just a cupboard, 14 miles away, you know, under the stairs. And I wait, and then I'll hear him crying, and then I'll let him out, and he looks at me like he loves me, and we're all ready to go again.

And kind of that's what's happening with Israel. They're not listening to God. They need to hear what God's saying, and He will bring them back to Him, but He has to show them His displeasure for a time. They wouldn't listen, though. And so, we can listen today. We can take from this what kind of God we have, and we can want to live and serve Him as He calls us to. A few Bibles, the NIV we have here, has this heading, Israel's Only Savior. The ESV has the whole chapter entitled, Israel's Only Savior. So, that seems a sensible theme to take as we look at this chapter. He is our only Savior. God is our only Savior. And what I want to do is just look at four things. What God did, what our Savior did, who our Savior is, what our Savior will do, and what our Savior does. And then, hopefully, we will be finished with the sermon. What our Savior did, first of all, then. As we open Isaiah chapter 43, this is what the Lord says, He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel, do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine. What God has done. As He calls the people not to be afraid, as you think of things that make you afraid, I wonder what does make you afraid. When you think of the future, are you afraid? Are you afraid of what's going to happen to the younger generation? Are you afraid for your health? Are you afraid for your finances? Are you afraid that God would leave you? What are you afraid of? Are you afraid you can't do things? Well, when we are afraid, one of the things that we're encouraged to do is to look back at what God has done. And what has He done? He created you, Jacob. He formed you, Israel. So, we're reminded of creation just by the very Word, and then we quite quickly jump forward to the forming of a nation, to God bringing up people to Himself. We know God is the one who did it. We know God is the one. We're all here today. God is the one who brings His people together, and we are reminded that He redeemed us.

We know that God has done this. Ephesians chapter 1 tells us that from before the beginning of the world, God set His love in us. God brought us. God predestined us. God has been doing this from the past. When did God start loving you? When did God begin anything with you? It's from before the beginning of the world. You can remember. You can look back and see things that God has done.

God is the one who has redeemed you. Now, the children of Israel, they knew this because their story is the story of being rescued from slavery in Egypt. Your story, as you look back as Christians, is that you have been redeemed. Ephesians chapter 1 again speaks about us being redeemed. In Him, we have redemption through His blood for the forgiveness of sins. We've been bought by God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Our only Savior has done this for us, and He has summoned us by name. I've called you by name. It's not all going to be about the puppy, but when we let the puppy out of the front of the house, we've got to do it, and we've been taught, say His name. Say His name, and then when He looks at you, tell Him to come. So, I say, Danny. And He looks at me, and He runs under a car in the driveway, not a moving one, but my summons is ineffective, isn't it? It's not working. And the more I say it, the less effective it seems to be.

[ 8 : 17 ] What a useless summons I give. God has summoned His people. God has summoned His people from there and from there. God has summoned His people through the preaching of the Word. God has summoned His people through the dreams that they have. God has summoned His people, called His people by name, and they come to Him. God has done that. It's effective. And so, we give thanks for what God has done. Now, we can't go through this verse, this chapter, word by word, but we'll dance around it a little bit. I want you to jump forward to verse 12 and see something else that God has done.

I have revealed and saved and proclaimed, I am not some foreign God among you. We'll come back to what that means, but there are some other words that are in the past of what God has done for His people.

When the Israelites heard, I have revealed and saved and proclaimed, well, they would have seen God's revelation of His power and His might in the act of the Exodus.

They would see it in the story of creation. They would see it in God speaking. They would hear and see God. He has done it. He has shown His work amongst us, and He saved them. They saw the Jordan dry up, and they crossed over that too, and they saw the walls of Jericho come down, and God has saved them from enemies around them. God has been with them, and they've heard the prophets tell them that this is what God has done. 2021.

It's great to be reminded of the Exodus. It's great to be reminded of Jericho. It's great to be reminded of all these things, but how has God saved us? He saved us through His Son, Jesus. He sent us a Savior in Him, and the writer to Hebrews tells us that in the past God spoke to us through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son. He's proclaiming through Jesus Christ, and we listen to Him, and we must love Him. This is what God has done for us. He has done it.

[ 10 : 31 ] Let's look at now our Savior who is. The Savior who is is the one that I want to draw your attention to from verse 8 to verse 13. See, what's happening in verse 8 to verse 13 is like a court case.

Lead out those who have eyes but are blind and ears but are deaf. Bring out the accused, you might call them. But the accused can't speak because the accused are idols, are false gods, are gods that do not really exist, that are not really there. Whose voice do you hear speaking as the court case is preceded with from verse 8 to verse 13? You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen. Before me no God was formed. I even am the Lord. Who speaks?

It's God who speaks. God speaks, and nobody else can, and He calls people to see that He is the only God. Now, why is God frustrated and going to punish the people of Israel? Well, one of the reasons is that they had forgotten that He is the only God. They'd been worshipping other gods. They'd been flirting with their world. They'd been going and making acquaintances. They should have. They'd been lowering the standards and not just thinking that there is one God who deserves everything that they might possibly be able to give them. He says there is no other God. When we call the other gods to defend themselves, they can't defend themselves. It's a little bit like going to a graveyard and saying, okay, all of you down there, will you say how you never sinned in your life? Will you defend yourselves? Well, they can't. They're dead. There's nothing. These gods can't do anything, and I think sometimes we need to remind ourselves that there are no other gods. The Hindus, how many gods have they? Hundreds of gods, but they have no God because there only is one God. We hear people speak about other gods, and we want to say, our God is greater, and He is greater because He's the only one who is.

There is no other God, and we forget that. We don't trust that there is only one God sometimes. We live as if perhaps, or there might be, or whatever. There is no God apart from Him. Why?

Well, before me, there was no God, and apart from me, there will be no God. There will be no one after me. I, even I am the Lord, and apart from me, there is no Savior. There's nobody but God.

[ 13 : 40 ] Do you need to remember that? Do you need to remember that when people, even when people accuse you of imagining that there's a God? He says He's the only God and the only Savior, and so even though it hurts, and even though you want to defend yourself, just trust Him. Trust Him. There's no other Savior. You don't need to be put off your stride by them telling you there isn't, because He tells us that there is, and it is Him. He is the only one. So, I encourage you to hear, to believe again, to be confident in the fact that there is one God, one Savior, and you hear about Him in the Bible, you hear about Him in the good news of Jesus Christ. The third thing I want to speak about is the things that our Savior will do. You might think logic would be better to finish with the will at the end, but I want to go to the things God does now at the end. So, let's look at what God will do just now. And what I want to say about the things that God will do is that it's as rich to look to the future as it is to look to the past. Imagine you were born a millionaire, and you had money all your life, and no matter how much of it you spend, it just keeps on growing, and then at the end of your life, you're an even richer millionaire, but you've got nothing you can do with it because it's the end of your life. What God has done for us in the past, He who created you, who formed you, who redeemed you, who summoned you by name, in the future, He just adds to that and gives us things that we will enjoy and enjoy and enjoy. And when we're going through the hard times like we might be going through,

He gives us things that we can love and enjoy. He gives us strength through the difficulties. That's where perhaps most of you find your comfort in this passage.

When you pass through the waters, I'll be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they'll not sweep over you. Well, that is to the children of Israel, that's, yeah, we know that. We know that because when we did pass through the waters, He was with us, and so we can be confident of His presence with us now. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze. The end of chapter 42, the punishment is God's burning anger, but it tells us here that when they walk through the fire that they're going to be okay. It tells us that in the future, God will give Egypt for your ransom. He will pay a ransom in their future. And it tells us that since they're precious and honored in His sight, hold on to that, and because He loves us, I will give people or men in exchange for you. And a child of Israel might wonder how that's going to happen.

Who's He going to give for us? Who's He going to give in exchange? And we might look back and say, we can see who He has given in exchange. He has given His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

He's given us everything that we need. He gives us more. And in the gospel promises that we enjoy, we know that God is with us. And as the gospel, the good news of Jesus has gone out throughout the world, we have seen this come true in different ways. He's brought children from the east, gathered from the west, says to the north, give them up, and to the south, don't hold them back. Bring them from afar.

[ 17 : 37 ] And you can hear Jesus saying, all that the Father gives to me shall come to me. And whoever comes to me, I'll never send them away. And they've been coming, and they are coming. It's wonderful just about in every church we go to in the world these days. Not everybody looks the same color. God has been bringing His people from all over the world, and it's happening. God is doing these things. These are the things God will do. But we look back at some of these things, and we wonder, is God doing these things for us? You look back even to the cross, and you sometimes feel empty. You sometimes feel frustrated. You sometimes think, well, is God really still with me? And I doubt He is, because on Tuesday, I did something I shouldn't have done, and all of these things. Is God really still with me? Will He give me anything? The Apostle Paul tells us that He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us, all? How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? What are these things?

What are these things? Well, what aren't these things? What will God not give us that we need? He gives us everything we need. He gives us His presence. He gives us assurance. He gives us courage. He gives us hope. He gives us everything that we need. This is our God, and this is what He will do, and we can trust Him. We can trust Him. We see more of what He will do as we move forward in the passage to verse 14, really to the end of the passage. Another part that you might like a lot and love to read is that God says to the people, forget the past. I'm going to do a new thing. Well, what's the context of that? The context of that is that God is going to punish the people, and He tells them, I'm going to be with you, but the people that punish God's people are going to be the Babylonians. And in verse 14, God says that He's going to bring down those people who eventually are allowed to punish His people, that ultimately the Babylonians are going to be brought down.

And then God reminds them, He's the Lord, the Holy One. This is what the Lord says, He who made a way through the sea. When did He do that? When the people escaped from slavery in Egypt, a path through the mighty waters, 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. God did that. God rescued His people from Egypt. God saved His people in that dramatic way, that miraculous way. And then God says, forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. Don't keep going back there. Don't keep going to the Exodus is, I think, what He's saying there. See, I'm doing a new thing. Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I'm going to save you in a different way, He's saying. See, what we do with this passage sometimes, with these verses, we say, forget the former things. Don't dwell on the past. See, I'm doing a new thing. Now, I was tempted to come here today and encourage you to see God do a new thing through a new ministry of a young man, and it's terrible to come, and the new ministers are younger than us, because we used to be the youngest. But God's doing a new thing. And I was thinking of, if you go into that room through the back there, you see lots of pictures of old ministers. Many of them have deceased, and we want to say God will do a new thing. Now, I don't have great confidence that God will do a massively exciting, great new thing just because of one man. See, in that room through there, there's a name called Charles Ross. He's got to be good, because his name's Ross, and his book is still published by the Banner of Truth. There's a minister there called Donald Sage from the 1800s,

I think, at some point, minister of the Gallic congregation. He's got to be good, because he had Lockean origins. And if you don't know how special that is, speak to me after. See, God is not saying, I'm going to do a new thing because there's a new young guy on the scene. If that was your hope, if your hope was in any minister coming who was going to be just better than the last ones or anything, what a hopeless hope you have if your hope is in ministers. I speak as a minister.

What can you look forward to? Well, these Israelites could look forward to the cross. These Israelites could look forward to God rescuing them through a different way.

[ 22 : 46 ] And they didn't always get it. It took them a long time to get it. They're still struggling to get it. See, the things that we're encouraged to look back on are great things. But even now, sometimes, I don't wish to sound like a heretic here. I've not been a heretic, but sometimes we say, look back at the cross. And at the cross, you see Christ crucified for your sin, a great miracle.

But you struggle to see it because the cross was a time of darkness. And we can say, don't just look there. See, I'm doing a new thing.

You know, is the Christian hope just in what Christ has done? No, our hope is in much more to come.

Our hope is in hearing God's Word. In 1 Thessalonians, it says, the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be up together with them, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. Christian, the past for us can sometimes be a murky place, a place where when we look at the wrong parts of it, we just depress ourselves.

You can look forward. You can look forward to imagine that scene. You can look forward to imagine being in God's presence. You can look forward to being with the Lord forever.

[ 24 : 41 ] And you are going to get there. You will be brought to that place. He will lose none of those that the Father has given to him. You will be there. How? Well, because of what the Lord does now as we finish.

If you look from verse 22, you get a pretty good description of the way that 21st century Christians live their lives. You've not called on me, Jacob. You've not wearied yourselves for me. You've not brought me sheep for burnt offerings. Now, I know most of you haven't brought sheep for burnt offerings. You've not honored me with your sacrifices. I've not burdened you with grain offerings, nor wearied you with demands for your incense. You've not brought any fragrant calamus for me or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. What's God saying? You've hardly paid me any attention. You haven't prayed. You haven't praised. You've shared the praise with other gods. You haven't given the offerings for the sin offerings. You haven't given the offerings for blessing God's work. You haven't given yourselves. You just lived for yourselves. And that speaks to us. It speaks to our culture. And we don't give up much for God sometimes. Maybe that's unfair. Maybe you are the people who have given up everything and would give up anything. But it's not what our society is generally like. It's not what Christian society seems to be like. But this is true of us. You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. This is what we keep on doing to God, isn't it? You, me, and everybody else. How are we going to get there? How can I look forward to being in His presence forever? Listen to these words, verse 25, take them home with you, rejoice in them. I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sakes and remembers your sins no more. What does God do today? Things that are in the present. There's not so many of them. I'll miss some of them out, but He blots out your transgressions and remembers your sins no more.

God's doing that. God is doing that for you. Now, God has done that. God will always forgive you your sins. That's what He's telling His people. If you come to Him, why would He do it? Well, I mentioned the words earlier, and I didn't make enough of them, and I don't have too much time to make enough of them now, but since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, there's a word from heaven. It's a word you didn't expect to hear. It's a word you don't deserve to hear, and I don't deserve to hear it either, but it's a word that we hear. I love you. I'll forgive you. And so, as we finish, if you're not yet a Christian, if you've been toying with Christianity, if you've been thinking maybe there are other ways, there is only one Savior, and He's God, and He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for your sins, and so put your trust in Him.

And if you've been playing with feet in two camps, if you've been like the children of Israel and not listening to warnings about what God is like, take this seriously and come back to God.

Know His forgiveness. Know that He wants you to walk with Him, not away from Him. Trust in Him. Fear not. Fear not. Don't be afraid as you look to the future. You have a God who will be with you.

[ 28 : 53 ] Make sure you try and go all the way with Him. Let's pray. Father, there's so much treasure in that passage, and we've just scraped the surface. May You bring truth from it to each one of us and help us not to be afraid. Help us to come asking for that forgiveness, knowing it's undeserved that You give it to us. Thank You that You are the God who is the Lord, and apart from You, there is no other Savior.

You're the God who forgives. Help us to trust You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.