

You Are Mine

There is a sense in which everything belongs to the Lord as Maker and Creator. 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Yet there is a distinct and separate ownership expressed in today's passage of certain men and women formed as a new creation and redeemed by precious blood. 'You', says God, 'are mine'. Here is another glorious gospel chapter that speaks of Christ's special ownership of a known and named people, loved of God and called by grace.

That's comforting ...

The theme of comfort for the Lord's people is again foremost in our Saviour's message. He tells us to be unafraid. This must have greatly reassured the remnant people of Judah in Isaiah's day when the prophet spoke of the trouble that lay before them and the nation's enemies gathered round about. Despite the hardships that lay ahead in Babylon God's people possessed two great comforts. The Lord told them, 'I have loved you' and 'you are mine'. These two statements mean everything. Knowing we are redeemed by Jesus Christ is our answer to every anxiety and the vexation of every foe.

Discerning love in our trials

Perhaps waters, rivers, fire and flame intended specific afflictions to the faithful in Judah but wide-ranging trials are common for all the Lord's people. If the Lord preserves us from violence at the hand of one enemy, Assyria, yet for us all there are hardships ahead in Babylon. For one it may be sickness and pain, for another it is loneliness, poverty or abuse. We fret for the souls of loved ones who are careless to sin. To us the Lord says, 'Since thou wast precious in my sight ... I have loved thee, fear not: for I am with thee'.

Special covenant grace

Chapters such as Isaiah 43 help us to understand the particular and distinctive blessings the Lord gives to His people. Covenant blessings are never general kindnesses, they are always sure and certain mercies. God's love is personal. The Father's election is distinguishing. Christ's redemption is particular and limited to the elect of God. The effectual call of the Holy Ghost is of specific individuals, by name and irresistibly applied. God's saving purpose separates amongst men and grace discriminates.

The Lord's wills and shalls

When the Lord gathers His people by the preaching of the gospel He does not offer salvation universally to all men and women, nor does He defer to the will of man. He confirms, rather, that salvation is borne of election and eternal life is the fruit of sovereign predestination. He promises, 'I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.'

Messiah-God

Furthermore, the Lord God declares that all God's elect from all parts of the world will be witnesses of His divine mercy, being chosen to know and believe the gospel. They will be witnesses against idolatry and advocates of free grace having been called to testify for the truth. Christ the Messiah, our Lord and Saviour, is God's chosen servant and since none but God can be our Saviour this is a proof that Christ is God. Just as the work of creation was sovereignly accomplished without man's involvement so no man can thwart, hinder or turn back God's redemptive purpose.

More to 'Behold'

There is a reference given of Judah's deliverance from Babylon by God bringing down their nobles, their army, their seafaring traders. However, this merely heralds an even greater marvel, one again introduced with a 'Behold' for its wonderful nature. Forget the old things, a new thing shall be done in the earth. A Redeemer shall spring forth, a Messiah shall rise up. Christ shall be revealed and His gospel shall flow like a mighty river through the wilderness of this world 'to give drink to my people, my chosen'. Here, too, the Lord gives the reason for this 'new thing'. It is to gather the Lord's elect for His own glory, a 'people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise'. The safety of the Lord's elect is as sure as God's own glory.

Remember: God's own glory

Judah had failed so often and neglected the Lord so frequently and, truly, we are no different from them, 'thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities'. Yet, again, for the Lord's own glory, and in free, unconditional grace, the Lord promises His people, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins'. This is the essence of grace and the heart of covenant mercy. For God's own sake, for the glory of His name, He has blotted out our sins.

Amen

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