

# Why Should You Love Him

*Isaiah*

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**Bible Text:** Isaiah 43:14-28

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## **Hope Baptist Church**

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Isaiah 43 starting in verse 14 through the end of the chapter.

14 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I will send to Babylon, And bring them all down as fugitives - The Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships. 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King." 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea And a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): 18 Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. 21 This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise. 22 But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. 23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. 24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. 25 I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. 26 Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted. 27 Your first father sinned, And your mediators have transgressed against Me. 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.

*O Lord God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the wisdom that you have granted us through it, Lord. Father, we pray today for Scott that the work that he has done over the course of this week will come to fruition here, that he will speak your words and impart to us your Spirit through him. Lord, help us to hear your words. Help*

*us to be constrained by them and bolstered up by them. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

As we're gathered here on the day where the whole world celebrates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the church looks back and forward. We look back in time to the empty tomb and the resurrection and then we look ahead to our own resurrection with Christ on that final day. In the passage here before us in Isaiah 43, God appeals to Judah in a very similar way to look back and also then to look forward to a new thing that he will do. God always has his people looking back and looking forward. The backward look is so helpful to understand God and his ways and if you can't look back, you'll never really be able to see your way forward and if you can't look forward, you won't be able to see what's ahead before you. So God has this way for his people that they are a people who are always looking back for their coordinates for what he might do in the future because he's told us in the past what he will do in the future.

So you have this very same thing in Isaiah and this is how God's people grow. It's how they have a steadiness in this world and it's really their only way of understanding who they are and what will come of them. This is why the people of God should be people of history. The Scriptures call us to study history and so this is the backward and forward look that we find in Isaiah 43 and it exists in a context though and I think we have to grasp the context. You'll see in your outline I've tried to profile that context in which the content of verses 14 and forward exist because the context is God is explaining how preferential he is toward his own people; how he treats his people better than he treats those who either hate him or who offer sacrifices heartlessly to him and therefore are displaying their true unbelief even though they do the deeds of religion.

So there is this whole context of God explaining his preferential love and in the first eight verses, he's explained it in so many beautiful ways. He says, "You are mine. I have loved you." These first eight verses are so marvelous and you can see the outline of those there. But then right after that, God takes us into a courtroom and he gives us a front row seat in a courtroom and in that courtroom he is calling witnesses and, as you can see, the blind are called. Then the nations are called. Then his people are called. They are all called to testify to God's love. They're called to acknowledge that, yes, God does love his people. That, yes, God has taken care of his people which is why when you ask a true Christian how it's going, he'll tell you about God's love. He is grateful for the trials and the troubles. He might even look back on the time when he lost all of his money or maybe he lost loved ones in death and he can tell you how God expressed his love through those things. It's an absolutely amazing miraculous thing that God does in the hearts of true believers. They are able to look back and what do they see? They see God. They see God and his holiness and his love.

So that's the scene here. It's a courtroom scene and then God takes the witness stand but he doesn't just take the witness stand, he is both judge and jury and witness in this courtroom scene. Now, it's possible that this courtroom scene continues on into the next chapter, into chapter 44, verse 8, but it's even more likely that the courtroom scene goes

on to the very end of chapter 44 because Isaiah is presenting this God who is telling his people who love him and his people Judah who do not love him and he is giving them many ways to understand his love and he is arguing with them that he is a blessed Savior. When you get into chapter 44, he continues this whole matter of witnesses and then at the very end of chapter 44, he turns back to the idols and I think he's comparing himself to the idols and he's saying, "You want to worship a god like that? What is wrong with you?"

So I think this whole context foretells this idea of God's preferential love for his people. You know, God is making a case. He's making the most important case that can ever be made and that is this: why would anyone want to put their lives into his hands? Why would anyone want to obey God? Why would anyone turn from the pushings of this culture? Why would anyone want to turn away from a wicked and perverse generation? Why would anyone want to turn away from the testimony of their own hearts and turn to God and his testimony? Why would anyone do that? And he is making this case for why. Why would you love him? Why would you give up your whole life to follow him? Why would you stop doing your own will? Why would you flee from sin? And here in this passage he gives many reasons why you should do that. God is arguing with his people. He is telling them of his love and he's telling them of his control.

Now, there are two ways that he speaks. He is speaking out of both sides of his mouth, by the way, because it's clear he is speaking directly to his covenant people who love him, who bring sacrifices, who pray, who desire him. Then in a moment, he turns to those who are clearly unbelievers and he seems to speak to them together and this is the way that God speaks. He speaks to the regenerate and the unregenerate and he'll say the same things in the presence of both and I think Scripture is written that way in order to make sure that those who would read his word would find out which one they are and so that when preachers preach, they know they're always preaching to both because they do not know who is saved and who isn't; whose hearts are truly with him or not because the truth is, many of them do outwardly bring certain kinds of sacrifices but God speaks out of both sides of his mouth to both kinds of people.

So here when we pick up the testimony here in verse 14, God is standing as a witness and a judge and he is continuing to make these proofs that he prefers his people and he loves them. So we've just gotten through the first 13 verses of that proof, now the courtroom scene continues and God is going to give examples of his delivering love and I've listed three examples that are given between verses 14 and 21. God is proving his delivering love and he speaks of God's destruction of Babylon in verses 14 and 15. He says, "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: 'For your sake I will send to Babylon, And bring them all down as fugitives - The Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships.'" This is a prophecy of being released from the Babylonian captivity over 100 years before it took place. The Babylonian captivity took place in 586 BC. This scene here in verse 14 takes place 70 years after they were first finally taken captive in 586 and it's God telling his people that he's working salvation for them and he is telling them that, yes, they will enter into captivity but also he will deliver them from that captivity and he tells

them why. He says, "For your sake." For your sake. God is going to take them into Babylon and he's going to release them from Babylon for their sake.

I think this is another marker in the Bible for you to learn that God does all things in history for his people. We speak of God's intervention in history. That's the wrong way to speak of it. God doesn't intervene in history, God creates history. He conceives of it in his own mind. He knows the beginning from the end and he ordains every part of it and here this captivity is the result of God's controlling power in the world and he does it for the sake of his people. This is the essence of covenant love. God is a covenant making God and his covenant is designed for the blessing of his people and the covenant is unbreakable and he is demonstrating here in this historical moment where the people are delivered from bondage in Babylon that he is a covenant keeping God. That he does keep all of his promises and not one word of his will fall to the ground.

Verse 14 has astonishing language here. He says, "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel." These words almost seem contradictory. How can he be a redeemer and holy at the same time? As holy, he demands punishment for sin and he must right every wrong. He must deal with every sin of every human being, but yet he is also a redeemer and he says that he is going to send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives. The fugitives are those who are running away. That God will send Cyrus and the Medes and the Persians to Babylon and they'll conquer it and they'll deliver Israel from the captivity and the Chaldeans ships, the Babylonian ships will be full of refugees. They took pride in their ships. They looked on them for their security and now they are fleeing in their ships, probably down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, away from their attackers and God is doing this.

He says, "I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King." Now, notice that pileup of the knowledge of God. It's a pileup of authority and purity and he says, "First of all, I am." Every single word in here declares the authority of God. Look at the words there, "I am." You're familiar with that. "I am the LORD, your Holy One, Creator of Israel, your King." It's hard to find a denser pileup of the authority and the purity and the goodness of God than that one phrase there in verse 15. But God saves his people, not because of who they are but because of who he is because he is and he is holy and he is the Lord and he is the Creator and he is the King and this is why God saves his people. He does it because of his own nature and his own qualities.

So why would you love him? Why would you give up your whole life to follow him? Because God is in control of all of history and here he makes a prophecy of something that will happen 100 years previous. That's one reason why you should love him, because he controls all of history.

Then the Lord reminds of their past at the Red Sea. So you see what's happening here, there is kind of the near future in over 100 years and then he goes back to the Red Sea to remind them of that. He's proving his preferential love. He is giving examples in history for it so verse 16, there is a reminder of their past deliverance at the Red Sea. "Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea And a path through the mighty waters, Who

brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick)." So the Lord takes his people in this courtroom back to the Red Sea again. The Lord takes his people back to the Red Sea hundreds of times in Scripture and he does it here through Isaiah's prophecy.

What is the exodus anyway? The exodus really is a picture of your whole life. It's a picture of your being created and being born and then being born into bondage and then not knowing or loving God and being abused by the abuser of the brethren, the devil himself, Pharaoh himself. He is that one. He is the devil. Then you're released from bondage and then you find that he is chasing you down and his army's hoof beats, you can hear them and what does God do? He parts the waters. He makes the seas rise and he puts a cloud behind you to put darkness between you and your accuser and then he puts light as a pillar in front of you and he leads you through the waters. It's the story of your life. He makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters for his people. He leads them through. This is a picture of the Christian life.

My favorite verse or my favorites words in verse 16 are these, "the LORD who makes a way." The Lord who makes a way. God makes a way. You know, when you walk with God, there is always a way through. Always. There is never a box canyon because God is with you. There is always a way through whatever that thing is and he not only makes a way for you in this figurative language here that calls up the Red Sea, but he makes a way for us in our greatest and most threatening dilemma, our sin. Our inborn inclination. Yeah, we were born that way and as a result, God has made a way through the greatest threat of our lives and that is our sin and the condemnation that is due us.

So he sets a trap for Egypt and he brings the chariot and the horse to the ground and he has his people on this highway, the hangman's noose for Egypt and heaven for his own people. In Exodus 15:10 it says, "You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like You?" Who sank? The accuser of the brethren. The one who hates your soul. He sank. He was killed. He was killed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and this is why Exodus 15 says, "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?" In Exodus 14, God makes it clear that the Egyptians will be no more. God says to them, "You will see them no more. You will not see them forever. They are gone." This is, I think, one of the great interpretive keys of this passage is this verse, verses 16 through 21, and it's a very clear reference to the Red Sea crossing.

You know, we read earlier that a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, not so with Egypt. Here in this passage it says he will put out the wick. Again, God is making an argument for his love, his preferring love, and it's like he's arguing with us. He's wanting to convince us with one image after another, one historical event after another, to convince us to not love the world but to come to him. And he is giving us reasons why we should love him; why we should cast all of our cares upon him; why we should spurn our idols; why we should hate our sin. He's giving us all of these reasons for that.

Then not only does he prophesy of this future destruction of Babylon, not only does he take us back to the Red Sea as examples of his delivering power, then he speaks of a new thing in verses 18 through 21. Look there with me because here in verses 18 through 21, God is commanding them to forget the past and now look forward. He was saying, "Remember the past. Remember the past." Now he's saying, "Forget the past. Forget it. There is more ahead. There are greater things. The past is nothing. It is nothing compared to what I'm going to do." Again, he's pleading with his people to throw away their idols, to turn to him, to cast everything upon him. All of their hopes. To care nothing for this world. To stop loving their stupid little pleasures and to throw their entire lot in with him.

So he says, after saying, "Remember. Remember." He's saying, "Do not remember." Verse 18, "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert. The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." So in verse 18, he says, "Do not remember. Do not remember the former things of Egypt's deliverance because I'm going to surpass them. Whatever incredible details you might call to mind in the deliverance in the exodus, don't get fixated on that." Remember, this is your God. This is what he does. God is always upgrading his care and his kindness toward his people. This is what history is all about. It's how God upgrades, how he saves the best wine for last. He is continually giving you one thing that is better after another.

He says that there is this new thing. The past is instructive but God has more things in mind and I think there are two new things ahead. There is deliverance from Babylon but deliverance from Babylon is just a foretaste of something greater. He is speaking of the new covenant. He is speaking of the coming of Jesus Christ. I'd like you to turn to Hebrews 8 because you'll get the connection if you see it here. Now, I won't read the entire chapter. Reading Hebrews 8 and 9 are critically important to understanding why Isaiah is using this language because he's using very similar language and the connection is made not only in Hebrews 8 and 9 but in many places in the Bible as we've seen in Isaiah.

But find verse 6 in Hebrews 8 and I'm going to read all the way down to verse 13. "But now He," the Lord Jesus Christ, "has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." This is that new thing. Verse 7, "For if that first covenant," that old covenant, "had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of

them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

So when the Lord says, "I will do a new thing," he's speaking to his people and he's saying, "Why would you want any other God? Where would you go to find anything better? Why?" He's speaking of the whole power of the Gospel in a person's life in this new thing that he's doing. You know, in the Lord Jesus Christ, what's new? A new heart, the Bible says. A new song. A new spirit. A new name. A new covenant. New and better ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. You have a new nation. You have a new song. You have a new covenant in his blood. And you have the new heavens and you have a new earth, in Revelation 21. He makes all things new. This is the progressive blessing of God upon his people. When you throw your lot in with God, when you get on his ship, it gets better and better and it never ceases to get better until finally the perfections of heaven are there.

The ceremonial law will not handle the joys and the blessings of what is coming and this change, this better thing is actually spoken of in figurative language in verse 20. Look at verse 20. This is beautiful. This is amazing here. He's speaking of the change that will happen in people's lives where a jackal and an ostrich, a despised animal, is no longer despised. Yes, you're a jackal. Yes, you're nothing but a hyena and a donkey. You could put any kind of beast, unsavory beast on this list. What don't you like? You don't like spiders? Put spiders in there. You don't like mice and rats? Put mice and rats in there. The mice, the rats, the jackals, the ostriches, the despised animals that will come and they'll inhabit your house and you'll hate them there, that's who is talking about. I think he's speaking of the Gentiles. The unclean animals.

Now, notice these are people. They are, "My people. My chosen." The defiled ones who have wrecked their thinking and their feeling and they are just worthless. They have nothing of value to bring to the table. They're just a bunch of jackals. This is the new thing. God will take a jackal and a hyena and a donkey and a rat and a despicable spider and he'll transform. This is the new thing. Well, you know, the offensive and the unworthy, not the beautiful people. Earlier this week, our family was reading the words of Jesus. It's the sick who need a physician, not the righteous.

It's a beautiful covenant and what does he do? He gives them water. They're refreshed. You know, they have no qualifications for their refreshment. They're desert dwellers. They're lost. They're despicable. They're unworthy. But why will God do this? Why? Why does he do it? Verse 21 tells you exactly why he does it. "This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." We were created to praise him. We declare his praises. This is why we were born, it's to declare his praise. God rescued the jackals and the hyenas and the rats and the spiders so that they would praise him; so that they would no longer act like jackals and hyenas and rats but that they would be completely transformed and they would have something to say. They would have beautiful things to

say. They would praise God wherever they went. All day long they would praise him. You can say that this is the image of the exiles going back to the Promised Land after captivity but it's more than that. It's those who begin a heavenly journey because the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ falls on them. They're convicted of their sins. They see how despicable and donkey and jackal-like they are and they turn from their sins and they cry out to God. They realize that they only have one hope. That a jackal cannot change his nature but God can.

So the world becomes divided into two kinds of people, those who drink of the waters and those who do not. Last night, Deborah and I were in bed and I was reading her Psalm 65, "The river of God is full of water." Psalm 65:9, "The river of God is full of water." I went to bed last night just saying that over and over again and verse 11, "Your paths drip with abundance." Your paths, that's the highway of holiness, by the way. Your paths, your highway, your way through the waters. While you're drinking from his river of delights. This is what he's speaking of. God is saying, "Why would you love me? Why would you give up your whole life to follow me? Here's why, because I can take a jackal and I give him water and I change him."

So then after showing his people what he can do and he has spoken of history. He is going to bring them back from captivity and he prophesies that. He brought them through the Red Sea and he's going to do a new thing. After he brings this testimony, remember, we're in a courtroom. God is testifying. God is arguing before his people and those who hate him and himself. He's arguing there in that courtroom for why they should love him and after showing his people what he can and will do, then he shifts to their major impediment to their hearing, it's their sin.

Now there is evidence against them in verse 22 to 24 and he confronts their wearying worship. These are religious people and they are wearied by their worship and they weary God in their worship. It's no fun for anyone, it's not fun for them and it's no fun for God. Excuse me for using the word "fun," but I think you understand what I mean. But the people of God weary him in their sins. They do not call upon him. Verse 22, "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel." Again, he's addressing this mixed multitude here, but he's speaking specifically of those religious who were created to praise him but they are not praising him. They're praising everything else. They praise the world. Their hearts jump and skip a beat over this world but not for God. God doesn't move them at all and he's saying, "Why don't you call upon me? How can you be weary of me? How can you after all I have done in history? After I have displayed my power, my mercy, why wouldn't you call upon me?" He's saying, "You are a prayerless people. You don't pray to me." He's saying, "You're a heartless people. You're weary of me."

The worship is boring to them. They're looking at their clocks. It's dead to them. They're not hanging on the next word. They want the last word. They want this to be over. They want to get it done. They came, they heard, they left. That's pretty much it. Now they're off to the fun stuff. It's like that fig tree full of leaves that Jesus cursed. It was leafy. It looked like a tree. It looked like a fig tree but it wasn't a fig tree because it didn't do what



fig trees do. Fig trees, the true Israel hears and they bear fruit as a result of it. They're not just marking time. So why would you love him? Why would you give up your whole life for him?

They're not worshiping him. Verse 23, "You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense." There are two things that he's saying. He's saying, "You're not bringing me what I have asked for." Now, I think there are two things that are happening here. God is saying, "You're not bringing sacrifices like you ought to," but then he is saying, "I never desired sacrifices anyway. I desired you. Your heart." That's why he says what he does when he says, "I have not caused you to serve me with grain offerings nor wearied you with incense." The grain offerings and the incense was just an outward expression of the heart. It was always that way. In these verses, the focus is me. Eight times he says "me." It's the way you relate to him and there is this uninvolved people. They're not bringing the offerings.

You know, God is speaking of the underlying purpose of the sacrifices. Now, there are three words that explain the purpose of the sacrifices and the first word is "expiation." The sacrifices were a symbol of the removal of defilement and this is why Christ on the cross made expiation as the apostles say. "Ex" means "out from." Removal from defilement. The second word is "consecration." Dedicating yourself to God. This was the second matter of the whole sacrificial system. And the third matter was "propitiation." This was vertical, satisfying the wrath of God and in propitiation, God sees the sacrifice of the heart and of the hands and he says, "I am satisfied. There is nothing standing between us anymore."

These offerings, they were gifts to God. They were acts of praise toward God and there were several phases to the actions because here I think we need to recognize that we're in the whole language of the ceremonial law and the sacrifices. We have to understand why is he saying this. Why is he bringing this up now as he's arguing for his love and he's trying to convince us to abandon the world? Well, there were various phases of the sacrificial system. First, the sacrifice was collected by the person. The person would bring his own property. It was an extension of himself. Then he would bring that animal and he would put his hand on the head and then he would kill it. That's the third thing the person would do. The Old Testament Christian would do that. Then the priests would take over after that and as the Old Testament saint would put his hand on the animal, it would be symbolic of transferring his guilt to that animal and then the animal would be killed and there would be the shedding of blood in order to depict how terrible sin is against God, that something must die. Then the person would bring it to the priest. He would bring the animal and the blood and the priest would sprinkle the blood on the altar and then the priest would burn it as a burnt offering. You know, when you brought an offering, you were bringing something of your own. Some resource. Some asset that you purchased. It was like everything that you have is an expression of yourself when you would bring that to the Lord as an offering and it symbolized your whole life.

So when you brought your offering to the Lord in worship, you were bringing your whole self. You were sacrificing. You were demonstrating that you wanted to sacrifice your whole life and so you brought this sheep and this goat but what was happening here that God is confronting, he says, "Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices." There was no honor toward God in the sacrifice. Then he says, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Now, sweet cane was one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil. You can read about it in Exodus 30:22-29 when Hezekiah was restoring worship of the sacrifices a month after he became king he brought anointing oil which was made up of five ingredients, one of these was sweet cane. You can read about this sweet cane in other places.

The fat. The fat symbolized the best part. It adds flavor and, of course, we learn from Scripture that the priests were corrupted by just wanting to eat the fat meat. They were gluttonous and they wanted the fat meat. But here the offerer often ate the meat here. It was a meal between the offerer and the Lord. It was a sign of relationship. He said, "You're not bringing me any sweet cane. Nothing sweet. None of your money and not the best part, not the fat. You don't bring me the fat."

The sacrifices that were being given that God is confronting, they had no heartfelt love. There was no genuineness in them. They were worthless sacrifices and they were wearying not only to the sacrificer but they were wearying to the Lord and here was the problem: the shadow had no substance behind it. The shadow, the sacrifice itself, had no substance behind it. That was the problem for the Old Testament saint and that is the problem with the New Testament saint as well when you participate in the shadow but the substance is not there. God has given the church two ordinances that display this substance in shadow relationship. Baptism is one of them. Baptism is a shadow of some reality that has already taken place in your life. You're baptized because your heart is turned. You have learned to hate the world and you want to hate it more and you want to love God more and you're throwing off the world and so you're buried with him in baptism but the baptism is just a shadow. It's a shadow. If there is no reality, then the shadow is worthless to you. And often people get baptized and they participate in the shadow but there's no evidence that they hate the world and they're throwing it off and they love Jesus Christ and you cannot baptize people like that. Sometimes we do because people will lie to themselves often, and to those who are doing the baptizing. But substance and shadow are together for them to be effectual and the same with the Lord's Supper. There is the substance and the shadow. In our church, we have this delicious bread and wine. That's the shadow but it's completely worthless without the heart.

So God says that he's wearied with cold hearts that shrug in worship and the marking of time and no appetite for God and the Sabbath is just another dull and weary day. You just can't wait to get back to your business. You just can't wait to get back to your exciting life. You can't wait to check the news on your sports team and your movies and your games. You have more joy for those. That's what God is saying in these verses right here. He's saying, "You have a lot of shadow and that's all you have." And the world, he's speaking to the people who the world is their delight and they keep their lip service up and they think they can sort of dance on the edges of Christianity but they cannot. He's

saying, "No that cannot happen." You say you can love God but your mind is elsewhere. This is what God is confronting and there is little joy for God and great joy in the entertainments and their mouthings of words and God is giving evidence against them here of a people who are weary and they weary God as well.

Then he wears them not only by their fake sacrifices by just being shadows, he's wearying them with their iniquities. Verse 24, "But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities." Notice these three words: burdened, wearied, iniquities. Here the Lord is bringing up this greatest problem, sin. There is a long dark list of iniquities and the language here that he is using is reflective of the doctrine of sin where there is a scroll. There is a book and every deed is logged in that book and there is a testimony. There is a book that will be opened on the last day and there is writing in it and the Bible speaks of this fact of a book that has all of your sins in it. You think of how many entries there are in this book for a people such as us. Somebody said that if a person sins once a minute every waking hour, he'll have 30 million sins in his book. But that's not even possible. It's such a terrible underestimation because we have a sin nature. Not only do we have sins that are written in the book, that's devastating, that's more condemning than you can imagine, that all of your sins are written in the book. The things that you did and you did not do. But it's worse than that because you have a sin nature. Through and through your heart is inclined toward sin and before you do anything, you think of it and sometimes you think of it and don't do it and there is a load of sin that is absolutely impossible to overcome. How many pages of the book, how many chapters are there? How many sections could there be in the book? How many volumes? How many bookcases? How many libraries would it take to hold all of your sins? That's what he's talking about. "Your iniquities have burdened me." They are written in a book.

Sin is such a burden in the soul of man. You can get physically sick and get over that sickness but you cannot escape the burden of sin. It's always with you. We're overdrawn. We're unable to pay. That's the problem and that's what Isaiah is saying here through the Lord or the Lord through Isaiah and we have such a weight of sin and we have various ways of dealing with it. Here's one way: we're convicted of our sin and so we change our value system to accommodate our sin. In order to get away from the conscious and the condemnation that is upon your mind because of your sin, you just change your position on that matter. This is how people change their theology often. It's really their conscience that needs to be alleviated and so we change our position in order to avoid the disturbance of our conscience.

There is another more creative way, it's maybe a little bit more helpful: we engage in comparisons. If we compare ourselves with others, we might feel much more righteous because this is the way our own self-perception works. Then our sins aren't such a problem because compared with others we're not really all that bad. So we feel better because we can feel worse about others and so we adopt a moral system that is self-congratulating, is what we do, that makes us feel good about ourselves. This is why you can have such great crowds by congratulating people's sensibilities and making sure that you do not cross up their conscience. Cross up their conscience, they probably aren't

going to come back. They do not want their value system to be challenged and their conscience to be activated.

But here what God is saying is that he knows that. He is acknowledging that. But then he speaks of his mercy in verse 25, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins." We're back to this book and something must be blotted out. What do you do with that book with all that writing on it for all to see? What do you do with that library? What do you do with the volumes that contain your sins and the record of them? What do you do? You cannot do anything about it. You're hopeless to do anything about it and that's why God says, "I, even I." This is a double promise, "I, even I. I, only I. I, even I. I am the only one. I am the holy one, the perfectly righteous one, the one who has the scroll in his hand."

Not only does he hold the waters in the hollow of his hand, he holds all the sins on the scroll. The hundreds and thousands and billions and billions of sins of his people. But he says, "I will blot them out. I will blot them out." Only God can forgive sin and I think he's saying, "Why would you do such a thing? Why would you turn away from my love? Why would you stay in the shadow when you could have your sins blotted out?" God is arguing with his people in a courtroom. He's testifying to the lunacy of staying in the shadows with no heart or no substance behind it at all. He's saying, "Don't you know I blot them out? I destroy the files." There is a well known political figure who was trying to figure out how to get rid of 30,000 emails. What God is saying is, "Why wouldn't you come to me? I blot them out. I blot them out! Do you understand what I am doing?" It is scandalous that God would blot out the sins of the jackals and the hyenas and the rats and the snakes and the spiders of this world and yet that is what he does with sinners. "I will blot them out."

Moses pleads with God to forgive Israel in Exodus 32 and he pleads with him, he says, "If not, blot me out of your book." This is how serious this is. David prays in Psalm 68:28, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living and not be written with the righteous." He's speaking of the evil, the wicked. Let them be blotted out. There are only two ways that sin will be blotted out: he will either blot out the sinner or he'll blot out the sin as a result of the work of his Son on the cross. That's why David said, "Blot out my transgressions." There is a stain on the parchment. It is absorbed into the fibers. It can't be removed. You can rub and rub. You can scrape and scrape. You can cut. You can wail and nothing can take it out except the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blotting out of sin doesn't happen by anything that man does.

"What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

"O, precious is the flow  
That makes me white as snow.  
No other fount I know.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

He says, "I will not remember your sins. I will blot them out and I will not remember them." Those two things. This is how God treats repentant sinners. He doesn't remember them. I take that to mean not that God is stupid and he can't remember, not that he has amnesia. God doesn't have amnesia. God doesn't remember the wrath. When he remembers the sin, he doesn't have the wrath because the wrath has already been dealt with and it's over. It's completely over. People can forgive you in this world and then you might find later on they're still hanging you over the fire. God is not like that at all. He does not do that. He doesn't bring you back. It's done. It is finished.

Then God in verse 26, God calls Judah to state the case of her innocence. Verse 26, "Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted." In other words, he is in this courtroom arguing, "Tell me. Tell me why you could be justified? Put me in remembrance." In other words, "Remember. Remember all these things. Remember who I am. Remember what I have done."

Then there is a demand, "Let us contend together; State your case." The courtroom scene here now has this call to testify. It's a final call to testify and then God is going to continue his testimony after this. "State your case. Tell me. What have you done to be made righteous in my sight?" And the answer is, "You have no case," and yet you have an advocate in Jesus Christ if he would have you and the purpose is that you may be acquitted in verse 26, "that you may be acquitted. Let us contend together." What he's saying is, "What is your case for mercy? Why should I forgive you? Tell me why you should go free? Tell me. Contend with me."

Then God reminds them of their root problem in verse 27, "Your first father sinned, And your mediators have transgressed against Me." Sin is their problem. It's not new. This is imputed sin. This is Adam's sin from the fall. Original sin. We were born that way. We were inclined to sin and God is giving them the doctrine of sin. "Your first father sinned."

And then the verdict is handed down in verse 28, "Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches." So there is no defense, there is no atonement, there is no mercy. God punishes sinners and he does two things: first of all, he judges the religious leaders. He judges their priests. The princes of the sanctuary and they were charged to uphold holiness but they did not. The nation became a reflection of their own lives: unholy and prayerless and heartless. This is the way that the Pharisees were judged in the days of the new covenant. Read in the Gospels, this is exactly what he's speaking about. He is going to judge the princes of the priests in the sanctuary and there is no hope for them.

So the chapter ends with judgment but I don't believe the courtroom scene is over yet because in the first eight verses, he cries out for mercy again and then from verses 9 to the end of chapter 44, Isaiah will go back again to how foolish, how insane it is to love this world and he will give one detail after another about how silly and mad it is because he's in a courtroom, God is, with his people and he's crying out to them and he's telling

them why they should love him and for us, he's telling us why we should give up our whole life and follow him. Why we should stop doing our own will. Why we should flee from sin.

Isn't there enough evidence given that you would love him? And here in this chapter he's just piling up one matter after another for why you should love him and God has created this courtroom scene and he brings the blind and the nations and he brings the wicked of this world and he brings his people and all of them are saying, "Yes, we should love you. It's absolutely insane not to." That's why the witnesses are brought. Why should you love him? These reasons are here in this passage.

I'd like to just close this preaching time with 1 Peter 1:3 because I think it's helpful to make the connections. 1 Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things which angels desire to look into. Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

So as we're here on the day that the whole world looks at the resurrection of Christ, the look of the church is both backward and forward as it is in this passage and what do we see? Do we see the love of God? Do we see a people cared for and carried? Do you know that? Do you feel that? Or are you still only in the shadow lands, just doing the outward things, thinking that somehow it will get you anywhere, but no, it won't at all. But the love of God is true. It's pure. It is measureless and strong. It's forever in the heavens and God offers it to all sinners and here Isaiah has given it to us in such a beautiful way. So we look back and we look ahead and we say, "Why should I love him? Why should I give my life to him? Why should I hunger for him to serve him?"

Let's pray.

*Lord, I thank you for this testimony of truth and grace. It's wounding. It's healing. It's helping us to see who we really are and where we live in history and what is ahead. Lord, thank you for your mercy toward us. I pray, Lord, that in this church you would help us to love you more, to see all the reasons for your love as you have outlined right here in this one single chapter. O Lord, help us to know it and to be holy as you are holy. Amen.*