

I have a friend who thought he had fallen too far from grace. For a time he felt he had denied the Lord by his life to the extent that he had forsaken his salvation and was beyond hope. If you've ever felt that way or know someone who does, our passage today is for you!

The first half of this chapter promised deliverance for those who were going to be in captivity. God declared that none could stop Him from His plan (Isaiah 43:13). That plan was for Israel to be His witnesses in the earth, along with the Suffering Servant who would come from among them (43:10). God was going to bring deliverance and salvation so that the world would know "I am He." That is to say the God of Israel is the one true, eternal, and sovereign God of all creation (43:15).

The chapter continues with God declaring His ability to bring the remnant of Judah back to the Promised Land. ¹⁶ *Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters,* ¹⁷ *who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:* Isaiah 43:16-17 YHWH parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22) and the Jordan at flood stage (Joshua 3:16-17). Could we not also see in verse 16 Jesus walking on Galilee as appears to be the case in the first half of this chapter (John 6:19-20)? How rich is God's Word that it speaks in so many ways at once!

God is comforting the future captives by reminding them what He has done before when their ancestors were captives in Egypt. If God could make a way for a nation to cross a sea and destroy the army of Pharaoh that pursued them, why shouldn't they have faith that God could do the same with Babylon? Why shouldn't we have faith that He can set us free from the captivity of sin?

In fact, God liberated the captives by making a path for the army of the Persians to enter Babylon by inspiring the Persians to divert the river that ran under the city. God literally made a way in the mighty water's river bed. Babylon's army was defeated by a tidal wave of Persian soldiers. Whether supernatural or natural, it is all God, the sovereign One.

¹⁸ *"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.* Isaiah 43:18 The captives in Babylon will not have to look back on the exodus from Egypt for inspiration. They will have their own exodus from Babylon that will be just as miraculous. We look back on God's work in our lives in the past to encourage us, until He does something new and greater.

Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 43:13 (ESV)

¹³ Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"

Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 43:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 43:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King."

Commented [PW4]: Exodus 14:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Commented [PW5]: Joshua 3:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

¹⁷ Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

Commented [PW6]: John 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19 In the deliverance from Egypt they fled from a rebellious Pharaoh. God provided a miraculous solution to an impossible situation. Now God would provide deliverance from Babylon by raising up a heathen king who would fight for them and even finance their return.

Which is more miraculous, the parting and closing of the Red Sea, or moving the heart of a king to do God's will? Seems like a toss up to me. Both are impossible with man. If you've struggled with your own heart in serving the Lord, imagine the miracle it would take to move the heart of a king to serve anyone other than himself! God made a way in the wilderness of a king's heart and streams in the desert of his soul.

²⁰ The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, Isaiah 43:20 Just as God provided for the Jews that wandered forty years in the wilderness, so God would provide for those Jews returning to the Promised Land. He would move the wild beasts of heathen people to honor God. They would, by a king's edict, give tax money for the restoration of Jerusalem against their will (Ezra 6:3-5; 8-10). Where there seemed no way and no provision, God provided from their bestial enemies and from the heart of heathen king.

You may not see any way for God to bring you out of your captivity to sin (John 8:34). You may think your desert is too dry to have any hope of surviving spiritually. You can't do it. You don't have the resources, but God does! We'll see how at the end of the passage. Just like He miraculously provided for them, He can provide for you, if you will look to Him and cast yourself completely on Him.

Follow Jesus' lifelong example of surrendering His will to the Father. It wasn't a sudden decision in the Garden of Gethsemane that caused Jesus to say, "Not my will but yours be done (Luke 22:42)." That was His daily life. If it's your daily life, when that crucial moment comes in your life, by God's grace you will continue to follow your life's pattern.

²¹ the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. Isaiah 43:21 Why was God being so merciful to this people whose fathers had been so rebellious? They were His chosen. He formed them for Himself that they might declare His praise. Is that not who you are? (John 15:16) Is this not what we are called to do, to declare His praise (Isaiah 42:10)? But are we? Having experienced His deliverance from the destructive bondage to habitual sins (John 8:36), let your heart be filled with gratitude for saving you from that life by seeing where it would have led you. Declare His praise to others. That gives them hope that they can be set free as well.

I hope you all understand what I'm referring to. The Apostle Paul writes of being delivered from this present evil age (Galatians 1:4). If you are a servant of sin in your

Commented [PW7]: Ezra 6:3-5 (ESV)

³ In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits,
⁴ with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.
⁵ And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God."

Commented [PW8]: Ezra 6:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River.
⁹ And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail,
¹⁰ that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

Commented [PW9]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

Commented [PW10]: Luke 22:42 (ESV)

⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Commented [PW11]: John 15:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 42:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants.

Commented [PW13]: John 8:36 (ESV)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Commented [PW14]: Galatians 1:4 (ESV)

⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

life, it will rob you of the relationship you could have with Jesus. It will keep you from the joy you could know. In the end, it will destroy you physically and spiritually. Don't believe the lying promises of sin. They never deliver and will cost more than you know. God formed you for Himself, so that you could declare His glory. If any human asked you to declare their glory, we would know it would be from a heart of selfishness. But when God says it, we know it is only right and comes out of a heart of love that desires our best.

22 "Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel!"

Isaiah 43:22 The Jews had the history, the writings, and an abundance of opportunity and yet they would not call upon the Lord and be saved (Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32). Instead they grew weary of God through their ingratitude and indifference. What a warning for us! I meet people who are tired of going to church. That is because they are just going to a building. How can you grow tired of fellowship with believers and sharing testimonies of God at work in your life and hearing testimonies from others? How can you grow weary of worship of the One who loved you enough to die for you, who has plans for your future that are so great He says you can't imagine it (1 Corinthians 2:9)?

Religion can become a ritual when our hearts are not involved. Israel grew tired of their offerings because they would not consider what the offerings represented. They lost a heart of gratitude for deliverance from Egypt, for a land of their own, for fields they did not clear and houses they did not build, for victories over their enemies, for the revelation of God through the prophets, and for being the guardians of the Word of God and His promises to man (Deuteronomy 6:10-12).

The lack of offerings just represented their lack of gratitude for all God did and was doing. The same can be true with us. Some people are excited to give. Others give grudgingly. Our attitude toward giving is directly related to our understanding of what God has done for us and our willingness to respond from a heart of gratitude (2 Corinthians 9:7). Have you ever just spontaneously emptied your wallet into the offering out of sheer gratitude? Some people have realized it really is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).

23 You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense.

24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. Isaiah 43:23-24 God declares that He had not burdened them, but they had burdened Him. Instead of offerings of gratitude, there was rebellion, sin, and iniquity. This was the history of Israel to this point, but grace was still being extended to them (Psalm 89:30-34).

Commented [PW15]: Romans 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Commented [PW16]: Joel 2:32 (ESV)

³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Commented [PW17]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Commented [PW18]: Deuteronomy 6:10-12 (ESV)

¹⁰ "And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, ¹² then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Commented [PW19]: 2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Commented [PW20]: Acts 20:35 (ESV)

³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Commented [PW21]: Psalm 89:30-34 (ESV)

³⁰ If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, ³¹ if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³ but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. ³⁴ I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

This may be your history to this point, but if you are still breathing, God is extending grace to you this morning. Repent! Call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Like Israel, you can go from being a burden to God to being a witness of His glory. He made you for Himself. Nothing else will fill the void in your heart.

²⁵ *"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.* Isaiah 43:25 Only the one offended can offer forgiveness to the offender. God can forgive because He provides justice for our sin through Jesus' sacrificial death in our place. It is not only love that sent Jesus, it is for God's own sake. He must be consistent with His perfect nature and that includes grace and mercy. He is also preparing a bride for His Son (Ephesians 5:31-32). We receive forgiveness and are transformed. He gets a pure and spotless bride for Jesus. She is the redeemed people of God.

Notice that God said He would remember our sin no more. Only God can chose to forget! We try to forget, but He does (Isaiah 38:17)! If you bring up your old sins which you have repented of and forsaken, He won't know what you are referring to! Hallelujah! Maybe you don't have an ugly past and can't say, "Hallelujah!" as heartily as some us. You can thank God for that (Luke 7:47)! In reference to the idea that someone can have a good heart without Jesus, Chambers wrote in today's devotion: "If I have never been a blackguard, the reason is a mixture of cowardice and the protection of a civilized life; but when I am undressed before God, I find that Jesus Christ is right in his diagnosis."¹

²⁶ *Put me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right.* Isaiah 43:26 It's not because of your holiness or anything you have done that caused God to redeem and forgive you (Ephesians 2:8-9). Like the Jews, we come from a long line of rebels, as the following verses point out.

²⁷ *Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me.* ²⁸ *Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling.* Isaiah 43:27-28 The first father may be Adam or Abraham, either way, both sinned. Every mediator transgressed: Abraham, Moses, David, priests, every single ancestor.

While God is speaking to future captives, verse 28 shows they have not gone into captivity yet. Those who think it was written by a later author during the captivity have to explain this fact away.

The passage would find a second fulfillment when the Jews reject the Suffering Servant. And yet, there is still hope. The next chapter begins with what Jesus referred to as "the promise of the Father" and looks forward to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit who can change our hearts so that we can live for the purpose for which we were created, the glory of the Lord and to declare His praise (Isaiah 43:7).

Commented [PW22]: Ephesians 5:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 38:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

Commented [PW24]: Luke 7:47 (ESV)

⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Commented [PW25]: Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest, July 27

Commented [PW26]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [PW27]: Isaiah 43:7 (ESV)

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

¹ "But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!" ² Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. Isaiah 44:1-2 Jeshurun is another name for Israel (Deuteronomy 32:15). In spite of their just punishment of captivity for the sins of generations of rebellion and ingratitude, God has chosen to show mercy again and help them. He has not forsaken those whom He has chosen and that is why they need not fear.

It was God who selected your specific DNA according to the good plan He has for your life (Ephesians 2:10). He reiterated in these verses that Israel is a chosen people. Someone has said that everyone who chooses to be chosen is chosen. The mystery of God's sovereignty and freewill is deep, but that simple idea bears consideration. If you choose to be chosen then you must be chosen for everyone who asks receives. Everyone who seeks finds (Matthew 7:8).

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. Isaiah 44:3 What the Jews were unable to do, the Holy Spirit would give them the power to do, to be the witnesses God intended them to be, to live for God's glory (Acts 1:8). This is the promise of the Father for which Jesus, before He ascended, told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive (Acts 1:4).

Peter could have quoted this verse in his first sermon to explain to the crowd at Pentecost what was taking place, in addition to Joel 2:28-32. Isaiah is clearly predicting the time when the Spirit is poured out to empower us to be the witnesses God meant us to be and to change our hearts.

⁴ They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. Isaiah 44:4 New life! Born again (John 3:3)! Flourishing like the tree in Psalm One by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit. As Jesus said, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:14 (NIV) This is the promise to those who meditate on God's Word and receive His Spirit, not just life, but vibrant, fruit bearing, abundant life (John 10:10)!

⁵ This one will say, 'I am the LORD's,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,' and name himself by the name of Israel." Isaiah 44:5 Well, is there anyone who will boldly declare it? "I am the Lord's!" My life belongs to Him! Does anyone here call on the name of Jacob? By that I believe God means that you recognize you were a deceiver but know that if God could change Jacob into one who prevails with God, then He can do it in you? If He could take the rebellious line of Israel and bring about the Messiah and twelve Apostles and the early church, there is hope for any and all!

Commented [PW28]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Commented [PW29]: Matthew 7:8 (ESV)
⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Commented [PW30]: Acts 1:8 (ESV)
⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Commented [PW31]: Acts 1:4 (ESV)
⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me;

Commented [PW32]: Joel 2:28-32 (ESV)
²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.
³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.
³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Commented [PW33]: John 3:3 (ESV)
³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Commented [PW34]: Psalm 1:2-3 (ESV)
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Commented [PW35]: John 10:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Will you write on your hand, "The LORD's"? If you have to have a tattoo, how about this one right on the top of your right hand? To be named Israel means more than just a given name, but can mean faith to be a new creation in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In this chapter we've gone from depths of the sins of generations to declaring by faith in Jesus' atonement that we prevail with God. We've gone from the depths of the past that God will forget, to being the bride of Christ. Glory to God! We've gone from realizing we are Jacob to knowing we are Israel. We've gone from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven, from being God's enemy to being the bride of Christ, all by His mercy, all by His grace, because He loves us so! Now declare His praise by your life and your words. Glory to God!

Questions

- 1 Why is God reminding them of the past?
- 2 Why does He then say forget the past?
- 3 Why did God make us?
- 4 What were the Jews weary of?
- 5 How was that expressed?
- 6 Why did God forgive our sins?
- 7 Why did God send Jesus?
- 8 Who can choose to not remember?
- 9 Why do we need the Holy Spirit?
- 10 What's on your hand?

Commented [PW36]: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.