

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 43

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 43

Theme: "Fear Not! The LORD is with Thee!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 43:1 (KJV) "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine."

INTRODUCTION

Fear is an integral part of our daily life. Everyone on this earth has experienced fear. There is the good kind of fear and the bad kind of fear. The good kind of fear causes one to live right and be a law abiding citizen. For example, the fear of being captured by the speed trap camera causes one to drive within the speed limit. The fear of being fired from our work causes us to work hard and be punctual. The fear of being punished at home causes us to obey parents. These kinds of fears bring out good behaviour, which is good for the society. It regulates the conduct of the citizens resulting in a decent and more liveable environment for all.

However, there is the bad kind of fear that cripples the person. He dares not go out of his house because he is afraid of being attacked and robbed. There are some neighbourhoods in certain major cities that are unsafe at night because one might be kidnapped. The fear of deaths and diseases can result in stress and sickness. The fear of calamities, of job loss, of the death of loved ones, of flying, and other irrational fears, has crippled many lives and changed many habits for the worse!

In Isaiah 43, the LORD comforts Israel because they had the bad kind of fear. The northern kingdom had been destroyed. The southern kingdom of Judah had also been told by the LORD through prophecies that they would also be exiled in the near future. To lose home, loved ones and nation is a nightmare that destroys hope. Israel was frightened for their future and their present. The plan of God's salvation for mankind depends on the existence of the nation of Israel. If the nation of Israel ceases to exist, where would God fulfil His plan to save mankind!

What is the best way to reassure a people with death, destruction and exile to look forward to? In this chapter the LORD will answer this question and at the end of that answer bring forth strength of faith and comfort to His people. God's people today need the same kind of reassurance. The trials and the end times that will soon befall this earth are worse than the destruction of Israel. We have much to

be afraid of if we do not know Christ as Lord and Saviour. But if Christ is our Lord and Saviour we have nothing to fear. What the LORD promised Israel in Isaiah 43 is also for every believer throughout the ages!

OUTLINE

1. Fear Not, the LORD is with Thee (vv.1-7);
2. Fear Not, I am the LORD! (vv. 8-13);
3. Fear Not, the LORD Controls All! (vv. 14-17);
4. Fear Not, the LORD will do a New Thing! (vv. 18-21);
5. Fear Not, Israel must Turn back! (vv. 22-28).

COMMENTARY

Fear Not, the LORD is with Thee

— 43:1-7

Verse 1 – Israel is called "Jacob" by the LORD at the beginning of this chapter to remind her of her humble beginning. "Jacob" means usurper which refers to the man Jacob before he was born again and did everything his own way until he accepted Christ and his name was changed to "Israel" (i.e. prince of God). The LORD began by reminding Israel that He was the One who created her. The use of her old name "Jacob" was to remind Israel that there was nothing lovely in Jacob to begin with when the LORD transformed a sinner into a saint. Jacob was totally depraved like everyone else to begin with. The

LORD indeed brought Israel into existence through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Genesis 12 to 25). The LORD created Israel in the very sense of the word when Israel never existed and the LORD brought her into existence just like creation when He created the world out of nothing!

The LORD also formed Israel. The use of "Israel" here is to depict Israel in her state of covenantal relationship with the LORD and her spiritual responsibility. Here the LORD used the term "formed" to depict the image of one who carefully fashions or sculpts something that is without form into a carefully designed entity, and in this case, a nation! After all the care that the LORD had put into creating and forming Israel, would He suddenly desert her and leave her to her own devices, even when she has been exiled into Gentile nations?

The LORD gently told Israel not to be afraid, like a loving father comforting his son who has been punished. The phrase "fear not" was not a stern command. Using past tense (have redeemed and have called) the LORD reminded Israel that He had already redeemed and called Israel by her Name. To be redeemed means ownership. A price was paid to make Israel an object of the LORD's possession. The LORD called Israel by her name, which means there was intimacy and a relationship. This was a relationship of a people and her God.

Israel belongs to the LORD. No matter where she is, Israel will always belong to the LORD, even in her state of dispersion! We know this because

the LORD continued to communicate with Daniel and Ezekiel when they were in Babylon. Seventy years after the exile, the LORD brought Israel back as He has promised and she was reborn! Ownership means protection and provision. Ownership means responsibility to do the Owner's will.

Verse 2 – No matter what Israel goes through, she must continue to trust in the LORD. Regardless of the darkness of the hour or feelings of being deserted by the LORD, Israel must hold on to her faith and trust in the LORD. Israel's witness for Christ in the darkest moment of her existence is the time when Israel must shine the brightest. She must not be afraid. Therefore when Israel passes through the waters as if she was in danger of being drowned, the LORD will be there with Israel. Will the LORD allow Himself to be drowned? Of course He will not! The LORD will not allow the river to overflow i.e. to drown and wash them away. He will also not allow the fire to burn them even though they might have to walk through it. Neither will He allow the flames (i.e. the tip of the fire where the hottest part was supposed to be) to kindle i.e. to consume them. No calamities will hurt or harm Israel. These natural disasters might destroy Gentile nations but not Israel. What was the reason behind this?

Verse 3 – The answer is given in verse 3. It was not because Israel was invincible or that the enemies have suddenly become weak for they will always be energized by Satan. The reason was that the LORD is Israel's

God. He is the Holy One of Israel who will protect and maintain His holiness in Israel. Therefore He will always be Israel's Saviour even in the midst of captivity into slavery. The LORD destroyed Egypt by the deaths of all her firstborn male when He ransomed Israel out of the land of bondage. The Ethiopians and Sabeans were sent by the LORD to divert the attention of the Assyrians to give respite to Jerusalem when they were surrounded by the Assyrians (cf. 2 Kings 19:9). The kingdoms of the Gentiles were also in the control of the LORD God of Israel! This is a most comforting truth to remind Israel of.

Verse 4 – Since Israel was precious in the sight of the LORD, she had been honourable i.e. precious to the LORD. Israel might have behaved dishonourably rather than honourably when she rebelled and sinned against the LORD in the years of the wilderness wandering, the period of Judges, as well as the period of kings when they worshipped idols, yet the LORD considered her as honourable. The reason was spiritual. It was the LORD's choice of her as the nation through which the Messiah would ultimately come that made her honourable unto the LORD.

The LORD also loved her. These two verbs are in the past tense, emphasizing the importance of the LORD having already established a relationship with Israel. This is the unconditional love of God for His people. There is nothing lovely in Israel for she is like all the other nations, totally depraved. Yet the

LORD loved Israel. No reason is given. This is the same love the LORD has for His people in the NT. Therefore the LORD will give men for her. People would die in order that Israel might live! What it means is that men would die because of Israel. The spiritual purpose through and in Israel must not be thwarted by any man, not even by Israel's own sin and disobedience. For example, the Assyrians attacked the Ethiopians and the Egyptians in order to give relief to Jerusalem.

Verse 5 – Once again the LORD comforted Israel by gently telling her not to be afraid. The reason was that the LORD was with Israel. The context of this reassurance was the exile. From the east and from the west is the emphasis in the second half of this verse. Regardless of how far they have dispersed, the LORD will surely bring and gather them back. To bring is to lead by the hand. To gather is to assemble them so that they will return in force rather than in drips and drabs.

Verse 6 – The LORD will say to the north and command it to give up i.e. let my people go. Let them all return back to Israel. The LORD will also say to the South to stop keeping back i.e. restraining them from returning home. Neither will the four corners of the earth be able to prevent God's people from returning back to Israel when it is time. God's sons and daughters will be brought back from far, even from the ends of the earth. Distance will not hinder or stop them from coming home to Israel. They are God's people and they will return

home regardless of how they feel and where they are. No distance will be too far. Once their hearts are moved by the LORD to return home, nothing can stop God's people. This was fulfilled in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah when the exile ended after 70 years of captivity.

Verse 7 – Who are the ones who would return? The ones who were called by the Name of the LORD will return. They bear the Name of God. This means that they know Him. They have a higher spiritual purpose for their return. Their previous home might be safe and prosperous but all these will dim and pale into insignificance when the burden of the LORD is planted in their hearts to return. God has created His people, every one of them for His glory. The purpose of Israel's existence is the glory of God i.e. to praise the LORD. Israel came into existence to glorify the LORD. The LORD formed every one of them i.e. He shaped and sculptured them to be who and what they are today! The LORD also made them i.e. maintain them to ensure that Israel fulfills the original purposes for her creation.

Fear Not, I am the LORD! – 43:8-13

Verse 8 – The attention suddenly shifts from Israel to the rest of the world. The reason is the impact Israel will have on the world in spiritual darkness. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes. Bring forth the deaf who have ears. They have to refer to the unconverted Gentiles. They have all these seeing and hearing faculties and yet they remained deaf and blind!

Verse 9 – Now that they have seen and heard the truth of God regarding all that He had prophesied, let them all be gathered together i.e. collected unitedly and let them be assembled (i.e. gathered for a purpose). Let them testify for who among them can declare this and show forth former things? Is there any idol in all the world who can do what the LORD God of Israel did?

If anyone of them dares to say that there are such idols or gods who is like the LORD God of Israel, then let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified. If they are not able to do so then let them hear the truth that is the Word of the LORD, and then say that what the LORD says is true. The LORD's prophecies and the LORD's statement is that there are no other gods like Him.

Verse 10 – Israel will be the LORD's witnesses that will vindicate what the LORD said. Israel had hundreds of years of testimonies from the time they came out of Egypt to know that there is only one living and true God on this earth and He is none other than the God of Israel. Israel is called the LORD's servant. The use of the singular for "servant" is a collective term for all the prophets like Isaiah past and future. The LORD had used them all. The LORD had communicated with them and they saw no similitude of man with God. God is Spirit! These prophets were all chosen by the LORD to do His holy will.

The purpose for the LORD sending these servants was that Israel might know and believe the LORD.

Israel will understand that the LORD is indeed the God of Israel. They are the same. Before, there was no one else but the LORD. There was no time and there was nothing but God alone in three persons. There is none like the LORD before and there will be none like the LORD in the future as well. The LORD is unique! This knowledge was for the benefit of Israel.

Verse 11 – Emphatically, the LORD declares that He is the LORD to Israel. There is none beside Him. There is no Saviour like Him. He alone is able to save. Idols are false gods and they have no power or ability to save anyone. The LORD had saved Israel many times and He will continue to do so in the future.

Verse 12 – The LORD's evidence that He was Israel's Saviour is found in this verse. He said that He had declared i.e. proclaimed and had saved. He had also shewed i.e. caused Israel to hear, understand, and obey when there was no strange god among Israel. All three verbs are in the past tense. This highlights to us what the LORD did for Israel in time past. There was no strange god in Israel's life had to refer to the time of Israel's beginning. These were days of obedience and gladness. These days had to include but were not limited to the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when Israel was about to be formed by the LORD.

During those days, Israel was God's witnesses. The world was able to see God by the way Israel lived as a people. The use of God (elohiym) here

is to emphasize the power of the LORD.

Verse 13 – Before the day was, the LORD said I am He. In other words before time began, the LORD already existed. The LORD is before time. If the LORD is before time and everything else including Satan is bound by time, how can such things be greater and more powerful than the LORD! There is none that can i.e. able to deliver anyone or anything out of God's hand. When He said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" it means that if the LORD was determined to do something, who is there who could stop the LORD! There is no one who can!

Fear Not, the LORD Controls All!

— 43:14-17

Verse 14 – The LORD revealed to Israel something very startling. The LORD, Israel's Redeemer and the Holy One of Israel, sent The Babylonians. The Babylonians were sent for Israel's sake. What an amazing way the LORD introduced Himself to Israel. I am the LORD refers to the covenantal relationship. It is because of the covenantal relationship that the Babylonians were sent. The LORD was Israel's Redeemer. He was the One who saved Israel repeatedly. He was the One who delivered Israel from the Land of Bondage after 430 years of slavery. The LORD was the Holy One of Israel, which means that He will not tolerate sin, not even from Israel, and He will surely deal with sin as a higher standard based upon God's perfect law had been given to Israel. There is no respecter of

persons with the LORD! Therefore, because Israel remained in sin, even after prophets had been sent by the LORD to rebuke Israel so that she will stop sinning and Israel had rebuffed all these attempts by the LORD, the LORD had to send the Babylonians for Israel's sake so that Israel will stop sinning and learn once and for all the detrimental effect of idolatry in her testimony to the world! The LORD had sent the Babylonians with all their nobles and the Chaldeans whose cry is in their ships. Ships were also sent by the LORD. They probably sailed round the Gulf of Aqaba to the Mediterranean Sea to attack Israel.

Verse 15 – Once again the LORD emphasized to Israel that He is the LORD, Israel's Holy One, the Creator of Israel and her King. As in the previous verse, the emphasis of the LORD's holiness is to stamp out sin, and He expects Israel who bears His Holy Name to reflect this holy character of God. When she does not, she will be punished. The LORD is Israel's Holy One. There is a personal relationship between Israel and the LORD that is based upon holiness! The LORD as the Creator of Israel emphasizes ownership. The Creator is the owner of that which He has created. Israel belonged to the LORD. He brought Israel out of nothing into what she is today! Israel must function as God had designed her to function. The LORD as Israel's King means that Israel must bow to Him. The LORD can do to her what He deems best. He rules and Israel obeys! Yes the Babylonians will come and Israel will enter into captivity but the LORD is still

sovereign! No matter how "hopeless" things might appear, the LORD will bring Israel out of Babylon one day.

Verse 16-17 – This is what the LORD has declared concerning Israel and the Egyptians. The LORD made a way in the sea when He parted the Red Sea in order for Israel to cross into safety when Pharaoh brought his chariots to try and bring Israel back into slavery. The LORD made a path in the mighty waters. No matter how powerful the might of the sea water was, the LORD simply and effortlessly parted it.

When Pharaoh brought in his chariots and horses and his army and his power i.e. might and strength, the LORD just wiped them out from the face of the earth. They lay down together at the bottom of the Red Sea. They never rose up again. They were buried in the sea. They have become extinct. They were quenched i.e. snuffed out like a tow i.e. a flax.

Fear Not, the LORD will do a New Thing! — 43:18-21

Verses 18-19 – The LORD told Israel not to remember the former things i.e. what the LORD just said in verse 16 and 17 regarding His deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Israel should also consider i.e. distinguish in the mind, the things of old i.e. the exodus! The question is why does the LORD not want Israel to remember the exodus? It is not one of forgetting it as Israel was given the feast of the Passover to help her not to forget! This verse means that, compared to what the future of the LORD's deliverance of Israel from the

Babylonians will be so amazing that in comparison to the exodus, the exodus ought to be forgotten! This understanding is also found in Jer. 16:14; 23:7-8.

The LORD will do a new thing. That was why Israel was told by the LORD not to remember the past. This new thing will spring forth like a new plant coming out of the ground. Israel must know this! The LORD will make a way in the wilderness. In the case of the exodus, the LORD made a way in the mighty waters. The LORD will make rivers in the desert. The desert is dry as dust. Yet the LORD will create rivers in the desert as Israel returns from Babylon. The LORD will not allow the topography and the terrain to stop Him from bringing Israel back to the Promised Land.

Verse 20 – The wild beasts in the wilderness such as dragons i.e. the jackal or some other creature and the owls will honour the LORD because the LORD will give them drink through the rivers and waters He will provide for Israel, His people. Israel is called His chosen ones here because Israel was chosen by the LORD to bring forth the Messiah in the future. That is why Israel must return. No wilderness can stop the LORD's will. The blessings of the LORD for His people resulted in the blessings of the beasts in the wilderness.

Verse 21 – Israel is the people of the LORD whom He had formed i.e. carefully molded and sculptured. Israel shall show forth i.e. enumerate by inscription the praise of the LORD! Israel will become a living testimony of

the powerful working of the LORD in her life. This will include her captivity as well as her return from captivity!

Fear Not, Israel must Turn Back!

— 43:22-28

Verse 22 – However, Israel has not returned to the LORD. It is not the LORD's fault but entirely Israel's. Israel has not called upon the LORD to help. The LORD called Israel "Jacob" here to emphasize her sin and rebellion, and the old man. The LORD had shown her tiredness of the LORD! How could Israel become tired of the LORD! She does when she takes God for granted. She does when she is far away from the LORD and living in sin! Here, the LORD called her by the new name Israel, to give her a gentle nudge that she has come so far. Do not throw everything away by remaining in sin but turn back to the LORD in humble repentance.

Verse 23 – The sins of Israel is enumerated in the next few verses. First on the list was Israel's refusal to bring offerings unto the LORD, not even small cattle i.e. a young sheep or goat according to the requirements stipulated by the LORD in the Pentateuch. This was for their burnt offerings which were for the atonement of sins. Neither did Israel honour the LORD by bringing any kind of sacrifice. The LORD did not force Israel to do any of these offerings! The LORD did not nag and nag to cause Israel to offer incense, which was to make the offering a sweet savour sacrifice unto the LORD! The LORD knows that these must come from the heart and not be turned into a ritual.

Verse 24 – Israel did not bring any sweet cane with money neither has she filled the LORD with the fat of their sacrifices. The sweet cane referred to here is "calamus" as KJV translated it in Exodus 30:23. This was used as one of the ingredients for making the special ointment or perfume which was restricted for the priests to use only (cf. Exodus 30:34. This means that the priests did not do their duties as priests at all. There were no sacrifices unto the LORD for if Israel were to dutifully and faithfully bring their offerings the LORD, He would be filled with the fat of their offerings because it would be in great abundance!

Sadly, Israel had made the LORD to serve i.e. to minister when Israel remained in her sins. The LORD had to do His work in ensuring His plan of salvation through sin-filled Israel. Israel had also wearied i.e. made the LORD tired (in the anthropomorphic sense) with her iniquities. The LORD will say enough is enough, one day. Israel had kept on sinning repeatedly one generation after another! There seemed to be no end to her sins.

Verse 25 – The LORD used the same phrase again here "I even I" am the One who blot out Israel's transgression for His own Name sake. Israel deserved to be destroyed for her repeated sins. But for the LORD's Name sake i.e. the fulfillment of His many promises and prophecies, Israel was spared. Therefore the LORD revealed that He will not remember Israel's sins. This is a very emphatic

statement. What it means here is that the LORD did not excuse the sins of Israel even though He used Israel to accomplish things while Israel remained in sin. In other words the LORD used a spiritually broken vessel to accomplish His holy will to save Israel. This must NOT be understood as if the LORD had erased from his memory the many sins of Israel. If that is the case then the LORD's immutability would be compromised! What it means is that the LORD still remembers all the sins of Israel but he did not punish Israel yet for her sins but still used her to complete His will to save the world from her sins.

If the LORD remembers, it means that He will take action. If he remembers Israel's sins, Israel would be punished. If the LORD did that, Israel would have ceased to exist long ago perhaps even before they entered the Promised Land.

Verse 26-27 – Using the imperative, the LORD commanded and demanded Israel to argue her case before the LORD. The LORD commanded Israel to cause or force herself to bring to the LORD's remembrance what she has done that was right and pure and just. Present your case to the LORD and plead i.e. make judgement before the LORD. The LORD was prepared to listen to Israel. Israel was commanded by the LORD to declare i.e. speak up and enumerate her points if she has any. The word for "declare" is the same word that occurs in verse 21 which was translated as "shew forth." If the LORD is wrong and Israel is right, let

Israel speak up and be justified by her evidence and arguments!

Israel's first father has sinned. The identity of the first father could be Adam or Abraham. But the context fits Abraham better because of the personal pronoun "thy". It was Israel's first father rather than the first father of mankind like in Romans 5. Abraham was a sinner brought out from idolatry by the LORD as revealed in Joshua 24:1-3. Israel's teachers i.e. scoffers which would refer to her priests and prophets have all transgressed against the LORD! In other words from the very beginning of Israel's existence even as far back as in the days of Abraham, Israel had sinned. She has no case against the LORD!

Verse 28 – Therefore the LORD has profaned i.e. polluted the princes of the sanctuary. These would be the best priests of Israel whom the LORD had made unclean. The LORD had also given Jacob to the curse i.e. utter destruction ("che-rem" —this was the word that the LORD used on Jericho which became the basis for her total annihilation, including all men, women and children). Israel had also been given to reproaches i.e. vilification by the LORD. Israel from the days of her old name (Jacob) to the new name (Israel) had existed based upon the grace and mercy of the LORD. Now, all that the LORD wanted Israel to do was to repent and turn back unto the LORD. Amen.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 43:1-13

TUESDAY: Isaiah 43:14-28

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 43:1-28

THURSDAY: Isaiah 43:1-28

FRIDAY: Isaiah 43:1-28

Discussion Questions

1. Do you know that you have been redeemed? By what were you redeemed? By what was Israel redeemed? Please explain.

2. Should the knowledge that God has redeemed you mean anything to you in your day to day life when you serve, work, play or after you have sinned or when others have sinned against you? Please elaborate.

3. Do you think that it is just or fair for the LORD to kill other men in order that Israel might live? Please explain.

4. Do believers have the glory of God in them? What is the glory of God in your life like? Are people supposed to see the glory of God in your life? Explain.

5. Is it true to say that the blessings of the LORD toward His people will result in residual blessings to the unbelievers? This is applied at home, in school and at work. Do you agree with this observation? Please explain.

6. Do you think CPBPC is being used by the LORD for His holy purpose while still in sin? Do you think that you are being used by the LORD while still in sin? Please explain.

7. The LORD used Israel who remained in her many sins. Does that not contradict the verse that we are to serve the LORD with clean hands and a pure heart? If God used sinful Israel to accomplish things, why do we need to have clean hands and a pure heart to serve? Please give reasons.

8. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
