

## Integrity Music

Paul Baloché – “The Same Love”

Sermon Outline

### THE SAME LOVE

You choose the humble and raise them high  
You choose the weak and make them strong  
You heal our brokenness inside and give us life

*The same love that set the captives free  
The same love that opened eyes to see  
Is calling us all by name  
You are calling us all by name*

*The same God that spread the heavens wide  
The same God that was crucified  
Is calling us all by name  
You are calling us all by name*

You take the faithless one aside  
And speak the words “you are mine”  
You call the cynic and the proud  
Come to me now

You’re calling, you’re calling  
You’re calling us to the cross

**Sermon Title:** The Same Love  
**Key Scripture text:** Isaiah 43:1-7

## ***Introduction***

When Christians talk about God, why do we describe him as a God of love? What is it about God that makes him loving?

Look with me at Isaiah 43:1-7. This passage spells out beautifully one of the major ways in which the love of God is expressed in Scripture: through *redemption*.

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have *redeemed* you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

<sup>3</sup> For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

<sup>4</sup> Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

<sup>5</sup> Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.

<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,

<sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” (ESV)

This entire passage is an explanation of what God says in the first verse: “I have redeemed you.” Another way of saying “I have redeemed you” is “I have called you by name” or “you are mine” (verse 1).

There are four questions about this passage I want to ask and answer:

1. If I’m not Jewish, does this passage even apply to me?
2. What does it mean to be redeemed?
3. Who does God redeem and why? (Two questions in one.)
4. How should redeemed people respond?

### ***1. If I’m not Jewish, does this passage even apply to me?***

This passage was originally addressed to the nation of Israel, as we see in the first verse: “O Jacob ... O Israel.” At the time Isaiah was written, the nation of Israel was the people of God. There were no other nations that he called his own. But with Jesus, things have

changed. Through Jesus, the people of God are no longer primarily an ethnic nation but a family of faith. According to Jesus's words in John 10, his people, his sheep, are those who "hear his voice" and follow him by faith (10:3-4). These are the ones he "calls . . . by name" and who are saved (10:3; 9).

We know that this includes more than Jews now, because Jesus says so just a little later in the chapter:

I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (10:16)

The flock of God, those whom he "calls by name" (Isaiah 43:1), whom he redeems, now includes all who follow the one shepherd, Jesus. It doesn't matter whether they are of the original fold of ethnic Jews or not.

Jesus is calling his sheep by name from every tongue, tribe, and nation; and once they are in the fold he makes true for them all of the good promises that were previously made just to the original Jewish fold. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]."

So as we look into this passage, know that the truths about redemption that we see in it can be applied to you, if you have heard Jesus's voice and are following him.

## **2. What does it mean to be redeemed?**

We saw in Isaiah 43:1 that another way of saying that God has redeemed us is that he has "called us by name" or "made us his own." But how does the truth behind these expressions affect my life?

Verse 2 says it means that when you pass through the waters, God will be with you. Rivers will not overwhelm you—you will not drown. And when you walk through fire you shall not be burned. The flame shall not consume you.

What do these expressions mean? There are very tangible experiences in Israel's history that we can relate them to, such as the crossings of the Red Sea and the river Jordan.

But notice that Isaiah is not pointing backwards but forwards: I *will be* with you. And see how he avoids specifically mentioning the stories from Israel's past? It appears that he is purposefully looking forward and using generic metaphors of flood and flame in order to represent any kind of disaster that might come upon God's people in the future, whether environmental, militaristic, spiritual, or whatever.

Do not make the mistake, however, of thinking that to be redeemed by God means that you will not experience suffering. He doesn't say that you will not pass through waters or

walk through fire—he assumes you will! It is implied that you will get wet, and that you will get very hot. But the promise is that you will not drown or be burned up.

God uses suffering in the lives of his redeemed to clean them and to remove their dross; but he will give them over to death. The suffering God has appointed for you will do its good work, and then God will deliver you from it completely and banish it forever (Revelation 21:4).

The old hymn “How Firm a Foundation” captures this well. It clearly alludes to verse 2 in our passage and celebrates the goodness of God’s redeeming love, even when it takes his people through difficult circumstances:

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

### **3. Who does God redeem and why?**

In verse 4, God says, “Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.” The second half of this verse, which talks about people being exchanged for Israel (which is also in the second half of verse 3), is God’s way of talking about redemption.

*Redemption*, according to the Oxford American Dictionary, can be defined as “the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment,” which seems to capture what God is saying here. In our passage, God says that the thing he is exchanging Israel for is other people. Which simply shows that God has a particular love for his people (in this case the nation Israel) that makes them more precious to him than those who are not his people. And he is willing to trade in these other people in order to gain Israel.

This is a difficult thought, since we would like to think that God loves all people equally. It is true that God loves all people (John 3:16); but it is also true that he has a particular love for those whom he calls his own, which we see here in Isaiah.

A helpful (though limited) analogy is to consider God as an engaged man and his people as his fiancée. It is right for the man to have a special affection, a particular love only for his fiancée that influences him to forsake all other women in order that he might take her

as his bride. So too God has a special affection for his people, and he is willing to forsake others in order to have them.

Now notice that Israel's redemption here is not attributed what she has done to earn God's favor. There is no mention of anything that Israel has done to make God love her. Rather, God simply says, "because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you..." Why does God have this kind of love for Israel? What has Israel done to be loved like this?

Moses answers this question in Deuteronomy 7 when he is explaining to Israel why she must live differently from the nations around her:

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

What is God's reason for choosing Israel? It wasn't because she was larger in number. Nor does God list any other qualities or actions that she has done to deserve his love. His answer in verse 8 is simply and basically, "I love you because I love you."

In the end, God doesn't tell us why he chooses some and not others. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 that God has a particular delight in choosing the foolish, weak, and the low and despised. But ultimately the fullest and best answer Scripture leaves us with is, "God chooses whom he chooses; he loves whom he loves." This is the gist of Deuteronomy 7 as well as passages like Romans 9.

The awesome thing about this truth is that, as incredible as we see God's love to be for Israel, the same love is ours through Jesus Christ. The same love that freely chose Israel, and saved her from captivity in Egypt, and gave her the Promised Land, and brought her back from exile in Babylon, and withstood all of her disobedience, and sent her a Messiah to save her from her sins, is the same love that God has for us in Jesus Christ.

This is the same love that Paul ends Romans 8 (a letter addressed mainly to Gentiles) marveling over:

<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul Baloche hits on it, too, in the chorus to his song "The Same Love":

The same love that set the captives free  
The same love that opened eyes to see  
Is calling us all by name  
You are calling us all by name

The same God that spread the heavens wide  
The same God that was crucified  
Is calling us all by name  
You are calling us all by name

The same love that redeemed Israel, that “called her by name” (Isaiah 43:1), is the same love with which Jesus is calling by name his scattered sheep from every tribe, tongue and nation—even you and me.

#### ***4. How should redeemed people respond?***

The last thing this passage tells us is how the news of God’s redeeming love should affect his people. After all of this talk about being redeemed, called by name, honored, and loved, God says, “Fear not, for I am with you” (Isaiah 43:5). Actually, you’ll notice that this is how he began the passage in verse 1: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” So God is returning to the purpose for which he has been telling us about his redeeming love in the first place: so that we would not fear.

Another way God says that he has redeemed us or that he loves us is to say, “I am with you” (Isaiah 43:5). And the right response to knowing that he is with us, knowing that he loves us, is to not fear. As Paul says elsewhere, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). Knowing the love of God should free you from fear.

But fear of what? In the context of our passage, there is the potential to fear trials—the waters and rivers and fire and flame mentioned in verse 2. For Israel, there is also the fear of not being restored as a people, since many are in exile in other lands.

But God says not to fear these things: he has good designs for his people. The waters and flames will not overwhelm or consume you; nor will your people be exiled forever. You will be sustained, and your people will be brought back (Isaiah 43:5-7), because God loves you.

#### ***Conclusion***

The same love that God reminds his people of in Isaiah 43 is the same love that he has in Jesus Christ for all of his sheep, whether Jew or Gentile. It is a special, stalwart, and steady love that he freely sets upon whomever he chooses to love.

His love means that he will redeem us from every threat—especially our own sin (Matthew 1:21)—even though it will involve him leading us through trials in order to test and refine our faith and character.

And the response of our hearts to this love should be confidence, fearlessness. Fearlessness about our present trials and future welfare. And fearlessness about our acceptance before him.

If God is for us—which he decidedly and eternally is for all who follow Jesus in truth—who or what can be against us?