

Time To Testify

Isaiah 43:1-13

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Early on in parenting, I learned how important it is to re-affirm the relationship with my children immediately after disciplining them. I never want them to equate my discipline with a rejection or abandonment of them! That couldn't be further from the truth. I wanted them to know so clearly how much I love them and am committed to them and their good. Children aren't the only ones susceptible to misapplied feelings of abandonment. Adults can feel that way just as easily, and sometimes even more so. It would seem that was how the exiled nation of Israel felt at the time Isaiah penned chapter 43. Israel was experiencing God's hand of discipline, but instead of rightly interpreting it, they felt abandoned and rejected, which could not have been further from the truth! In our study today, we will see that

Our lives should be a testimony to the marvelous love of The Lord our God, the Holy One of Israel, our Savior.

Relational Reminders (1-7)

Verse 1 begins with the conjunction "but now," linking our passage into the verses before, making the point that a change is occurring. The end of chapter 42 is about God's discipline upon Israel for their failure to remain faithful to Yahweh. But now, God wanted to remind the people of Israel that His discipline didn't indicate rejection as they might be tempted to think. They had experienced a complete defeat at the hands of the Babylonians; they had been scattered (exiled) throughout the land, and the glory of Jerusalem, the temple of Solomon, had been destroyed. Amid this darkness, God wanted them to remember how valuable and precious they were to Him.

We see this in the progression of verbs in verse 1. From "creating", to "forming", to "redeeming," to "calling by name," culminating in the declaration that "you are mine". God clearly reveals His intimate relationship with His chosen people. These first 7 verses are a love letter, a relational reminder to the nation of Israel of just how much the LORD loves and values them. For those who had ears to hear, this would have brought great comfort during these 70 years of exile under Babylonian rule. God's love for them would also express itself through a promise that God would again gather His people back together in Jerusalem (vs 5-6). This promise was fulfilled when the Persian king Cyrus decreed that all Jews could return to Jerusalem around 538BC. (see Ezra chapter 1)

Lots of Evidence, but a Lack of Witnesses (8-13)

In verse 8, there is a sharp transition into a court scene, where God gathers together the nation of Israel along with the other gentile nations to testify regarding a "declaration" and "the former things." I am convinced that the declaration God is looking to hear from His witnesses is the booming declaration of verse 3: "I Am the LORD your

God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” But no one is able to declare this. Israel (blind and deaf) has not only failed in recognizing this reality for themselves but has failed in their mission to proclaim this truth to the nations. This dual failure results in a complete lack of witnesses. But God has plenty of evidence to show them and will use Israel as His witness even if they cannot testify. The “former things” center on what God did for His people in redeeming them from Egypt (vs 3b-4).

The remaining verses are a scalding rebuke to a nation that has failed to live up to its role as God’s witnesses. They had failed to know and believe Him despite the countless examples of His loving faithfulness towards them. Yet God’s character has never changed. He is their God, and He will be faithful to love them and fulfill His promises to them.

There is so much for us today to be challenged by in these verses. First is the importance of recognizing and centering our lives on the declaration that God is The Lord our God, the Holy One of Israel, our Savior. By the incredible Grace of God, He has grafted us gentiles into His family, and Jesus left his disciples with the commission to be witnesses to “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. Thank God they took their role as witnesses seriously! But do we? Do we see our lives as **testimony to the marvelous love of The Lord our God, the Holy One of Israel, our Savior?** If God were to call us and those around us to testify about His love, would we be able to? Would our co-workers? Would our classmates? Would our teachers and neighbors? May the Holy Spirit of God convict us if we are living lives that do not testify to His great love and mercy towards us and do not proclaim that truth to the world around us.

Grace News and Needs

Business Meeting: Join us today at 4pm for our business meeting. Bring some finger foods to share.

Gala Tickets On Sale: Christmas Gala is Dec 8th and 9th, tickets on the patio.

Mens Ministry:

- Servers needed for Gala nights. Sign up on the patio.
- Mens Prayer Hour: Come join other men in prayer. Sat Nov 11th @ 9am in Room 2

Blood Drive: November 10th, 2-6pm in the Modular. Sign up @ www.Lstream.org

VOM Needs for November: Bath towels, wash cloths, anti-septic wipes

Helping Hands is here to serve the body! If you have a need, grab a form from the foyer and drop it in one of the grey boxes. For more information on our events and ministries, visit www.gccramona.com