

v25 “Although it may not make much sense for God to blot out a person’s sins and not hold him guilty for the evil done, such is the indescribable grace of God that is born out of his amazing love. He forgives because of who he is. He desires to be reconciled with his people so much that he makes the renewal of the God-man relationship possible. Being forgiven is not a thing that a person does; it is accomplished solely on account of God’s merciful granting of complete freedom from guilt” (Smith 2009: 215).

v25 “It is plain that Israel’s problem is not solely, or perhaps even mainly, physical captivity. A deeper problem than bondage must be addressed. What about the sin that caused the bondage? It is not enough that the Lord should be the God of history who can make the pagan Cyrus serve him. It is also necessary that sin be addressed. Unless it is dealt with in such a way that both its guilt and power are removed, deliverance will merely start the cycle over again. The deepest question of all is not, Have the gods defeated God? but Has sin defeated God? Here...Isaiah is able to answer by faith, “No!”” (Oswalt 1998: 161).

v26 “We humans do not like grace; we like to feel that we deserve everything we get. We want to be able to say that our good behavior has earned favorable treatment for us before the bar of God” (Oswalt 1998: 161).

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What promises similar to verse 2 do you hold to when going through hard times?

If God created you to declare his praise (v21), how is that being fulfilled in your life?

Are there ways in which you weary God with heartless “sacrifices”?

### SOURCES CITED

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## ISAIAH 43: GOD’S COMMITMENT TO REDEEM HIS PEOPLE

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 43

- I. God’s commitment to protect and restore Israel (43:1-7)
- II. God’s call to Israel as witness to his prophecy of salvation (43:8-13)
- III. God’s design to do something new in restoring Israel (43:14-21)
- IV. Israel’s unwillingness to repent despite God’s offer of forgiveness (43:22-28)

### NOTES

v1 “Much can be endured if we have a sense of destiny borne out of particular identity. Strip that away from us and we think going on in life is hardly worth it” (Oswalt 1998: 137).

v2 “There is no promise here of a quick fix or a trouble-free future, but of God’s sustaining presence right through to journey’s end, come what may. They are words which we ourselves may appropriate and treasure with complete propriety, for as the old covenant opens out into the new, the people of God, even though they have the cross and the empty tomb behind them, remain aliens and exiles in a hostile world. And it is the faithfulness of the same God, who has promised never to leave them or forsake them, that will bring them home” (Webb 1996: 175).

v2 “Calvin’s observation is particularly apt for the present age: “The Lord has not redeemed you so that you might enjoy pleasures and luxuries...but so that you should be prepared for enduring all kinds of evils.” God does not say that there are no floods or forest fires, but he does promise that one can survive them because of his presence (cf. also Ps. 66:12; 1 Pet. 1:6–7)” (Oswalt 1998: 138).

v3 “For God no price is too high to pay for the redemption of his own. He would go to any length to find a substitute for them. What is not clear is whether a specific historical incident is intended. Many...maintain that Cyrus is being promised the prize that both the Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors had sought—rule of the lush Nile Valley—in return for allowing the Jews to return home....It seems best to see this passage as a concrete imaging of that principle, which was ultimately worked out in him who knew no sin becoming sin for our sakes (2 Cor. 5:21) and giving “his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). It was ultimately not Egypt and Nubia that God gave in ransom, but his own Son” (Oswalt 1998: 140).

v4 “Just as a groom finds his bride precious and worthy and lovable when others fail to see those qualities in her at all, God sees these things in us and is willing to pay any price to redeem his bride from her captors. But God’s grace is that he loves us without the self-delusion of some human grooms (and brides). He knows what his people really are (42:18–25), but that does not make them less precious to him. That is grace” (Oswalt 1998: 140).

v10 “It is interesting that it is not said here that they were chosen so that others might know he is God. To do so would get ahead of the process. Others are to know, but only after the people of God themselves have come to know him. The knowledge of God is never merely a set of intellectual theorems (like the distance from the earth to the sun) that can be transmitted without teacher or learner ever having proved them by experience” (Oswalt 1998: 147).

v12 “*you are my witnesses*. It is interesting that Jesus spoke similar words to his disciples at his ascension (Acts 1:8). Like it or not, they

were witnesses of who this man was in his life, death, and resurrection” (Oswalt 1998: 149).

v15 “The four epithets contained in this verse are an OT theology in miniature. If their content were fully plumbed, there would be little more to say” (Oswalt 1998: 153-54).

vv16-17 “The description is obviously related to the exodus. But it is not so much the events themselves we are invited to reflect on as it is the power, the love, and the dependability that the Lord demonstrated in those events” (Oswalt 1998: 154).

v22 “By focusing on the ritual the people forgot about the freedom that God’s forgiveness could bring to those who had a personal relationship with God. Apparently some people did not see these Levitical instructions as guidelines that they loved to do (Ps 119:105) or viewed them as exercises that brought them closer to God. Lacking a personal covenant relationship with God, their religious activities were merely formal activities of required obedience and not true expressions of a heart overflowing with love and joy” (Smith 2009: 213-14).

vv23-24 “God had not *enslaved* and *wearied* his people with arduous ritual. But they *have enslaved* and *wearied* God with their sins and iniquities” (Oswalt 1998: 160).

vv23-24 “If they are weary of the pointless rituals, how much more is God” (Oswalt 1998: 159).

vv23-24 “Far from being a reason why God would owe special favors to his people, their attempts to use cultic ritual to manipulate God were only one more manifestation of their deeply ingrained inability to surrender themselves, their needs, and their destinies to him” (Oswalt 1998: 160).

v25 “Once spoken, this word of forgiveness totally dominates its context, like a shaft of brilliant light piercing a night sky. The dark sayings around it simply serve to throw it into sharp relief” (Webb 1996: 179).