

Fear or Fear Not

The world is in the midst of a serious pandemic, one that is life threatening. As a result, the majority of people are responding in obedience to civil authorities and staying home.

Accompanying this unique situation of isolation may be boredom and a range of emotional responses. None of us knows when this will end or even if the economy will recover. There may be a concern for jobs, income, investments and debt repayment. For some emotions may go beyond concern to fear due to the outlook and the circumstances of life - whereas the Lord would say to us "fear not."

We obey civil authorities for our good and in the interest of the health others. We also understand that there are potential consequences for disobedience in terms of fines, social shaming, our health and the health of loved ones. It only makes sense to obey God for the good of our emotional health and as a testimony to others. Disobedience under these circumstances may also bring consequences relating to our emotional and spiritual health, and we may affect others by becoming a poor example to those around us.

Isaiah 43:1-7 provides us with reasons not to fear regardless of the circumstance. Isaiah's message is to Israel but there is illustration and application for us today. The previous chapter ends with a sobering account of Israel's stubbornness and their lack of response to God's Word. Chapter 43 is a response of grace in the assurance of God's care and His plans for them. In the midst of a pandemic of disobedience and uncertainty about the future, twice God says to them "fear not" (43:1, 5).

Reason 1 The Price Paid

To Israel, there is a reminder of redemption in this passage. Verse 3 recounts the price paid, "I gave Egypt for your ransom. The Holy One of Israel is their Savior, due to the act of redemption He can say, "You are mine", (v.1).

The price of our redemption is far greater in that the precious blood of Christ redeemed us. God demonstrated "His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

Reason 2 Their Preciousness

This is made explicit in verse 4, "Since you were precious in My sight." It is implied in verse 1, "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." In Zech.2:8 God calls them the "apple of His eye" and in Ex.19:5 they are God's "special treasure." God loved Israel with an everlasting and unending love.

Believers in this age are precious to the Father. We are part of His family, children by birth and sons by adoption. We are in the Beloved, joint-heirs with Christ, and objects of His grace.

Reason 3 His Presence

The promise in verse 2 is that in the dire circumstances of life God's promise to Israel is His presence with them even in stormy waters. He guarantees to protect them whatever they face. His presence is the guarantee to Israel that they as a nation will not disappear.

We too have the same assurance of His presence with us in His promise never to leave us nor forsake us. At salvation, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of whom the Lord Jesus said, "another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth." (Jn.14:16, 17).

Reason 4 His Promise

In this passage, the promises relate to the end of the Tribulation and the re-gathering of the nation of Israel. The covenant made with Abraham must be fulfilled as Hebrews 6 reminds us; the oath and promise of God guarantee the outcome.

God has promised believers forgiveness of sins, eternal life, a home in heaven, and much more. Scripture reminds us that it is "in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before time began." (Titus 1:2).

Reason 5 His Purpose

Ultimately, all God does in Creation and Redemption is for His glory. (V. 7). This will be fully visible when the Lord Jesus returns to earth and according to Zech. 6, "He will bear the glory."

This is true in His dealings with us. The work of salvation is to the "praise of the glory of His grace." (Eph.1:6). We have nothing to boast about, not our works or merit, we are saved to His glory.

Application

The message, the promises, and the interpretation detailed in Isaiah 43:1-7, all belong to God's covenant people, Israel. God does not make the same promises to us in the Church age. By way of illustration, Christians can make an application to our life in light of the fact that believers are not given a spirit of fear and that perfect love casts out fear.

The 49th Psalm states that the redemption of the soul is precious; the price was the life of the Beloved Son of God. Collectively we are also precious. As pictured in the parable of the pearl of great price, the merchant went and "sold all that he had and purchased it. Individually we are precious to Him in that we are children of a loving Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God". (1Jn. 3:1)

We have the guarantee of His presence with us, sealed, baptized by, indwelt and led by His Spirit. The One who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" will not desert us in time of need. God has promised, "All things work together for good to those who love the Lord," and "we can cast our cares on Him because He cares for us." We have a home in heaven and "are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1Peter 1:5).

Conclusion

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" (Heb.13:5, 6) So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; **I will not fear**. What can man do to me?'"

1. "Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed, For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.
2. "The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose, I will not, I will not, desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake."