

# He Himself Blots Out Our Transgressions

Isaiah 43:22-28

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## **Introduction**

God is very gracious.

- In chapter 39, He declared that His covenant people had so transgressed against Him that the day was coming when He would deliver them into the hands of the Babylonians.
  - For years they had provoked Him with their obstinacy and rebellion,
    - and now it had come to the point that the curses pronounced by Moses in Deuteronomy must fall upon them...
    - He tells them specifically that Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed and that the sons of David will be made eunuchs in the palace at Babylon.
      - It was a hard message...
- But we have seen from chapter 40 on that our gracious LORD,
  - in pronouncing this destruction and judgement,
    - cannot restrain Himself from coming to them with words of comfort and hope.
    - He pours out all sorts of promises and encouragements.
    - He assures them that He will still bring to them and to the nations the salvation He promised to Abraham and to them!

And last week, we looked at the first 21 verses of chapter 43.

- And there we saw that the LORD would redeem them from exile!
  - Even though they would be in bondage to those who did not fear God for a time, the day would come when they would be delivered from their enemies!
- And we saw that Isaiah speaks of more than the return to Jerusalem under the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.
  - He speaks of a deliverance that will be greater than the deliverance from Egypt!
    - He uses the Babylonian exile to speak of the complete deliverance that Jesus will bring from bondage to the world, to Satan, and even to death!
    - Jesus Christ will come and He will reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
      - God's people are often brought under the rule of ungodly men, but the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ.
        - Righteousness will fill the earth.
        - It is a glorious hope!

- All this means that when you feel the bondage of the church in her disobedience today,
  - you need not despair!
  - Bondage does not have the final word for you in Christ!
    - Even though we may pass through the waters,
      - they will not overflow us,
    - Even though we pass through fire,
      - it will not hurt us at last!
    - He will bring us forth as His kingdom of righteousness to freedom!
      - This is our redemption from Babylon and from Satan!
        - This is redemption we look for with eager anticipation.

But you may remember that I told that there was a whole other aspect to redemption!

- Not only is there redemption from bondage to Babylon,
  - there is also redemption from sin!
  - That is what we are going to look at this week.
- But I want you to know that I am not going to cram so much content into this message as I have been doing.
  - In discussion with the elders this week, I was able to see that I have been trying to pack too much in to some of these messages from Isaiah.
    - It is a matter of not wanting to leave out what is in the text, while at the same time trying not to bog down in this one book for longer than is profitable.
    - But if there is too much to be digested, it is not profitable...
      - so today I am going to take a smaller portion for our text and spend more time bringing out the riches that are here—
        - illustrating what is here for us and applying it to us more.
  - What I had before thought to cover in one week I am going to cover in two.
    - Last week we looked at redemption from exile in Babylon, or bondage to ungodly rule,
      - and I told you that this week we would look at redemption from sin.
    - But now, instead of covering redemption from sin in one week, I am going to take two weeks...
      - So that this week, we will look at redemption from the guilt of sin
        - and next week, we will look at redemption from the presence of sin.
      - This week is redemption that brings pardon...
        - and next week is redemption that brings transformation of life.

So now let me direct you to our text, Isaiah 43:22-28 to look at this wonderfully comforting subject,

- Redemption from the guilt of sin.
- I want to start off with a question related to verses 22-24...

### **I. Are you bored with the living God?**

- It is a most reprehensible thing, but I fear that it is much too true of us all.
  - Look at how God charges His covenant people with this sin and ask yourself if it does not apply to you.

#### **A. First He says, “But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob!”**

1. The LORD has just told them that He is going to do a work among them that will be so marvellous that it will make their redemption out of Egypt pale by comparison!
  - You would expect His people to be greatly encouraged by this!
  - You would expect that such a promise would cause them to call upon Him!
  - I mean, *really* call upon Him!
    - Not just go through the motions of saying their daily prayers or gathering for public worship,
      - but I mean that they would earnestly seek Him!
      - that they would lay hold of His throne of grace with great eagerness and gusto!
  - He just told them that He had formed and chosen them to be His witnesses and to praise Him...completely liberating them to be His own.
    - Just think of it!
      - Chosen as the people that God was going to pour out His grace upon so that they would declare His grace and praise!
      - Surely this would stir up a yearning for Him—a desire for Him—a desire to experience the fullness of His salvation and to glorify Him.
    - But instead of calling upon Him, they are indifferent...
      - They seem to be bored with it all...
2. And really, are we any different?
  - a. Most of you heard these precious promises last week...

- You heard that these apply to all of God's covenant people whom God has purposed to marvellously redeem through Jesus Christ.
  - We saw that now much more of God's work has been done—
    - Jesus has come into the world and He has triumphed over Satan and the world so that we are given even fuller assurance that we shall overcome...
      - that He will reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
- b. But did God's precious promises stir you up to call upon the LORD?
- 1) Did you bring prayers to Him in response to these most excellent promises and declarations He made about us?
    - Did they make you yearn to have the fullness of the liberty from bondage that He speaks of?
    - Did it move you to know how much He loves you and what kind of future He has for you?
  - 2) Perhaps it did...
    - Perhaps you were encouraged and stirred to call upon Him with a greater earnestness upon hearing these things...
      - Perhaps you can honestly say that you were already doing so, even before hearing His word.
    - But can any of you say that you have ever called upon Him in a way that is in keeping with the greatness of what He has promised?
      - Can you claim that your response has even been close to what it should be when you consider that being sold to Satan,
        - The LORD promises you complete emancipation that you might serve Him in His house as an heir with Jesus Christ?
  - 3) Surely at last we must all conclude that we have not called upon Him—not as we should...
    - To put it in the language of the third commandment,
      - we have taken God's name (what He has revealed) in vain.
      - We have not given it the response or the attention that it deserves.

B. He goes on to say secondly, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

1. Weary of God!

a. Imagine that!

- We all yearn to be loved, to be cared for...

- And here is the One who loves us better than our own mother—better than the best mother—better than the best father who has ever lived.
- He has demonstrated His love in redeeming us—
  - When He spoke these words to Israel, He had already redeemed them from Egypt and made them His own people,
    - and now He has promised them a far greater redemption that is to build upon that first redemption...
  - And we already experienced the next phase of that redemption as Jesus Christ has appeared in the world...
    - and we have seen the grand demonstration of God’s love for us in the cross and in His suffering there for us.
    - Here is the God who made heaven and earth—who loves us so well—
      - and we are bored with Him.

b. Let me ask you,

- When a young woman finds that she is loved by a worthy man,
  - does that make her bored?
  - No, it spurs her to action!
    - She doesn’t say, “O what a weariness it is, I have to go and spend time with this One who loves me more than all the world.”
    - No, she goes go with cheerfulness and joy.
- Or what if you discover that you have been given a great inheritance...
  - Does that make you bored?
  - Do you say, “O what a weariness it is, now I will have to go and claim this inheritance and all the bother.”
    - No, it spurs you to action! You yearn to possess the treasure that you have been given.

2. But you see here that the LORD charges His people with weariness concerning Him.

a. He had graciously given them all sorts of ordinances of worship.

- There was a whole system of ceremonial worship that was designed to keep His promises and grace ever before them.
- It was a system of worship in which they could express their gratitude and thanks to God for taking them to be His people,

- for redeeming them and gathering them and giving them hope.
  - It was a system of worship in which they could seek Him and be comforted in His presence with them.
  - It was a system in which they could learn of their holy God and of how to live gloriously as His people, and find grace to live in His calling.
- b. But they found all this to be a pain... a weariness!
- 1) So much so that the LORD charges them with having not even done it at all.
    - Look at verse 23 and 24:
      - Isa 43:23-24: “You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices;
  - 2) Now you may look at this and say,
    - But this does not seem to be true...
      - They did bring burnt offerings before Him...
      - He did require them to bring grain offerings and incense.
      - They did purchase sweet cane to make the incense and the anointing oil for His service...
      - And they did bring before Him the fat of their sacrifices.
    - Indeed they did...
      - Just as Christians today will gather for worship each week,
        - and they will sing praises and they will pray,
        - and they will hear sermons and they will bring their offerings,
        - and they will come to the Lord’s Supper...
      - But they do not do it in the way that the LORD intends.
        - Their spirit is not right—they do not come with appropriate joy and gladness—with eagerness to know Him and to receive His grace.
          - They come as if it is a burden.
        - He never appointed these things to weary us.
          - He did not give us the Sabbath to be burden to us...
            - “I have to spend a whole day with the LORD when I’d rather play baseball.”

- If the service that God appointed for us is a burden to us, it is not at all the service that He has appointed!
    - It is supposed to be a joyful expression of our love for Him!
    - It is supposed to be a time of earnestly seeking Him whom our souls yearn for!
    - It is supposed to be a delight and joy!
  - But we are like Israel.
    - We would find more pleasure worship that we design.
      - We don't find that much pleasure in remembering all that God has done for us and all that He is to us and all that He has promised.
      - We are about as cold as a dead fish.
    - The LORD is not saying that He never appointed worship for His people.
      - He is saying that He never appointed worship that was burdensome...
      - and that is the worship they were bringing.
3. The end result is that *we* have burdened Him.
- a. You see how He adds this at the end of verse 24. He says:
    - Isa 43:24: But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.
    - You can see what a burden this would be to Him.
      - Here He has given us worship that ought to delight us, and we come dragging into His courts, dull and unmoved.
    - There is no justification for us to be weary with Him...
      - But there is every reason for Him to be weary with us!
      - It is wickedness of the highest sort for us to be weary with Him in the very place where He makes His promises and grace known to us!
  - b. Instead of bringing Him acceptable praise and worship,
    - we bring before Him our sins and our iniquities.
      - There is nothing that we have done—even in our worship—that is, in the strictest sense of justice, acceptable to Him.
        - We are never what we really ought to be before Him.

- We come short of His glory.
- c. What a desperate condition this leaves us in!
  - Here we are, God's own covenant people and we have wearied Him even in our very worship!
    - What a dreadful state!
    - What hope is there for such a people whose very worship is offence to their God?

TRANS> But just look at the next great thing that our text declares to us!

## II. The LORD Himself blots out your transgressions!

- This marvellous truth is fully declared to us in verse 25:
  - Isa 43:25: "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins."

A. This is such a splendid thing!

1. This means **no** guilt, **no** condemnation!
  - Our sins are pictured here as written up in a great record book.
    - And He blots them out!
    - He removes them from the record so that they can never be brought up against us!
    - They are gone—gone forever!
      - Our sins that would have driven us down to hell forever—gone!
        - They are entirely blotted out never to be remembered against us.
          - never to be brought up again.

TRANS> What comfort there is in this! What joy!

2. And see how the LORD emphasises that He Himself is the one that blots them out!
  - a. He does not leave this matter to some angel who might not completely carry out the task!
    - He does not leave it up to us to blot them out...
    - He says, "I, even I am He who blots out your transgressions!"
      - There is a very strong emphasis to tell us that this is something He alone does!
      - It is not left up to us or to some priest or to some other agent—



- In His matchless grace, He takes on the task Himself!

b. The truth is, He is the only one who could do it.

1) What sort of sacrifice would you be able to bring to make up for your sins?

- What sort of penance might you do?
  - What sort of offering might you make to atone for such sin in you that you even weary God in your very worship of Him?
  - What priest is going to be able to atone for such sins?

TRANS> It tell you that this is a work that only the Lord could do

2) And we who live in these days—after the appearing of Jesus Christ...

- know exactly what He Himself did do!
- He Himself, the very Son of God who is fully God,
  - came in human flesh and went to the cross to atone for our sins!
    - Isaiah is going to fully declare this when we get to chapter 53.
- But we who live in these days know what was done!
  - We do not glory in our own works, but we glory in the cross...
    - We glory in the work that Jesus did on the cross to atone for our sins...
    - God forbid that any of you should glory except in the cross of Jesus!
      - It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy that we are saved...
        - It is by the work that He has done for us!
  - He Himself has done what we could not do!
    - And because He has done it, we know that it is not some kind of half-ass job!
      - It is complete and perfect and we can have full confidence that we are fully pardoned!
    - As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us!
      - There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus!
      - Who is He that condemns—it is Christ that has died!
      - He has said, “I will remember their sins no more!”

B. The great thing about this blotting out of your sins is that it is not based on anything that you have done.

1. Just look at how verse 25 is related to the ones that go before...

a. The truth is; it has no relationship!

- The Lord has just declared that even in our very worship we have burdened Him with our iniquities...
- And then He just breaks out and says,
  - “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins.”
  - He just breaks out and says that.

b. His forgiveness is a total surprise!

- He has just been declaring how desperately sinful we are and then suddenly He just breaks out and says,
  - “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgression for my own sake.”
  - There is no reason for it...
    - no reason that can be found in us...
    - I mean, why would He do this?

c. He says that he does it for His own sake!

- It is all to be found in the good pleasure of the LORD.
  - He does it because He chooses to do it...
    - because it seems good in His eyes...
      - not because He is obligated to do any thing of the kind.
- In the very place where He has revealed Himself, in the very worship of His own people,
  - He finds great wickedness and sin...
    - but in this very place where sin abounds, where sin is really seen at its worst—grace abounds far more!
    - This is what we read in Romans 6...
      - That where the law was, sin abounded—
      - And that where sin abounded, grace abounded even more!
        - You would think that it would be the other way around—that there would be less sin where the law was,
          - but instead where are told that there was more.

- We wrongly look out at the world with its idolatry and rape and all the rest...
    - and we say, “that is where the really bad stuff is—out there—not among the people of God.”
    - But the LORD says, “Oh no!”
      - “The place where sin is the most conspicuous is right here among the people that I have chosen and called—
        - “In their ingratitude and indifference to me even in their very worship of me!
          - “This is where the depths of man’s depravity is most evident!”
          - These are the ones who ought to cry out and say,
            - “Who will deliver me from this body of death!”
          - These are the ones who ought to say,
            - “I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!”
        - “But where sin abounds, my grace abounds far more!
          - “It is to this people that I say,
            - “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake.”
            - “Not because of any thing that you have done, but for my own reasons—because I am gracious.
2. And see in our text how the LORD goes on to drive home this point that it is all of grace...
- not because of anything in you...
    - that He receives you and pardons you?
  - a. He knows how hard it is for us to come to grips with the fact that there is no merit in us...
    - He knows that we keep on wanting to find reasons in ourselves for His acceptance of us...
      - and so He issues a challenge to us...
- 1) In verse 26 He says:
- Isa 43:26-27: Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted.

- He is giving us a chance to tell Him if He has forgotten about some merit that is in us... something He has overlooked.
    - He is saying—“remind me if I have forgotten!”
      - “If you can bring forth your innocence, you can be acquitted by that.
        - “If you don’t need me to blot out your transgressions,
          - “you can go ahead and tell me what you have done that makes you acceptable in my sight.
  - Now really brothers and sisters, what are you going to say?
    - Doesn’t this make it painfully—and marvellously clear that there is nothing in you to commend you to God?
      - I mean really, He is God and you are a sinner—through and through...
        - What are you going to say?
          - When have you ever really been what you ought to be before Him?
          - Can you tell God about that?
          - He will accept it if you can!
          - He says, “State your case and you will be acquitted!”
          - Do you have anything to say?
- 2) Oh yes, but then there is the claim about your heritage that might come up.
- You know how the Jews held on to this!
    - They had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!
    - And we sometimes boast in Calvin or in the fact that we come from a long line of believers (if any of us do)...
      - How many Christians today will tell you that because they are part of this church or that church, they are right with God.
  - But what is Abraham or any of our fathers but sinners who were redeemed by the free grace of God?
    - The heritage Abraham passes on to his seed is not that of personal merit or personal righteousness, but salvation by grace through faith!
      - It is a heritage of grace, not a heritage of works.
      - It is a heritage of redeemed sinners, not a heritage of righteous persons who need no redemption.

- The LORD reminds us of this in verse 27...
  - Isa 43:27: Your first father sinned, And your mediators have transgressed against Me.
  - Their fathers, and all their mediators...
    - their priests who represented them with sacrifices before God...
    - their prophets who spoke the word of God to them...
    - their kings who ruled them in the name of the LORD...
      - All of these are sinners...
        - None of them can boast of any merit before God.
  - So it is with all the great fathers and leaders in these last days...
    - from Peter to Paul to Augustine to Calvin to whoever your favourite theologian or preacher or martyr may be...
      - They all have this one thing in common...
        - They are all sinners.
        - There is none righteous, no not one!
        - There is nothing to bring forth from man apart from the man Christ Jesus who is God incarnate for our salvation.

TRANS> It is all of grace—free unmerited grace—that we are pardoned!

- If God Himself does not blot out our transgressions, we are lost and without hope.
  - But you see, He does! He does blot them out for His own sake!
- 3. Oh my brothers and sisters, as a preacher of the gospel, this is what I labour for you to understand.
  - I yearn for you see clearly that God does not accept us because of anything that we have done...
    - It is only because He has freely and graciously blotted out our sins!
    - It is because of His free and gracious action, not tied to any goodness that could be found in us...
      - but all of His mercy and His great act of redemption for the remission of our sins.
  - Do you see what comfort there is in this for us?
    - It means that you don't have to do anything to keep up God's mercy!

- It does not depend on you or what you have done!
  - It depends on Him alone as the one who blots out your transgressions.
  - There is absolutely security for you if you will look to Him.
  - Away with all notions of personal merit and personal righteousness!
    - You are free from trying to attain favour by that method!
    - It is all of the LORD's mercy.

TRANS> But there is yet one more thing to be added before we leave this subject.

- The LORD does not want His covenant people to have false expectations.
  - Having just told us that He is the one who blots out our transgressions and that He will remember our sin no more, He adds,
    - “But you are still going into exile!”

### **III. Even though He forgives us, we are still subject to His chastisements for our sins.**

A. You can see that this is essentially what He says in verse 28.

1. Having just told them in verse 27 that their first father and all their mediators have sinned against Him, He says in verse 28:
  - Isa 43:28: “Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.”
    - Over the years, the transgressions of the nation have piled up and it has come to the point that the LORD must deal with them.
    - He must humble them and purge them in Babylon.
2. Let me explain to you what each phrase in v. 28 means...
  - a. First, when He says that He will “profane the princes of the sanctuary,”
    - He means that He will, for a time, treat His princes as common.
    - That is what it means to profane something—you no longer regard it as holy—
      - God will take away the special protection that He has given all through the Assyrian domination to David's house.
        - They will be brought into bondage.
        - They will be deported in the same way that the princes of the other nations will be deported.
        - They will be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

- We have seen this and we have seen that there will be deliverance—
    - but now the LORD is telling them that even though He blots out their iniquities, they must still bear the penalty that He has foretold.
  - b. Secondly, when He says that He will give Jacob to the curse,
    - the same sort of thing is implied.
    - The word “curse” is the word *khay’ rem* which refers to something that God has devoted to destruction...
      - In Joshua’s day, the cities of the Canaanites were given over to *khay’ rem*—
        - They are under the ban, appointed for destruction.
      - So the LORD is saying here that the city of Jerusalem will be devoted to destruction...
        - It will not longer have the special protection it had enjoyed during the invasion of Assyria.
          - It will be destroyed... reduced to dust and rubble.
  - c. Thirdly, when He says that Israel will be “given up to reproaches,”
    - He means that they will be mocked and ridiculed rather than honoured in the world.
      - It will not be like it was in Solomon’s day,
        - or even in Hezekiah’s day when they enjoyed deliverance from Assyria and were honoured and feared by the nations.
      - Instead, nations will mock and say,
        - “Where is your God? You have become just like us.”
        - The Babylonians will burn incense to their gods for victory over the God of Israel.
- B. And so it is that we must learn something from all this—something very important.
1. Something similar to what we learned last week...
    - Last week we learned that even though the LORD may deliver us over to destruction and bring us under subjection to the world and her rulers,
      - even the rulers of Babylon who do not fear the living God,
        - He is still just as committed to our final emancipation as ever!
        - He will bring us out of the exile!

- He will bring us out from under the dominion of ungodly powers and authorities and establish his kingdom of righteousness...
- He will bring us forth from bondage to Satan and death and the world and we will serve Him in liberty as His sons forever.
- We do not yet see all things brought under the feet of Christ, but He will reign until all His enemies are brought under His feet.
  - All the while that we are in exile, He remains just as committed to His promise to deliver us as He ever was.
  - Isaiah writes these words to encourage those who believe in such times to not lose hope.
    - We will be brought through fire and water to freedom.

TRANS> That is what we saw last week, and what we learn this week is very similar:

2. This week we learn that even though we go into exile and times of great affliction, God is still the One who blots out our transgressions.

- Or, to look at in the other way,
  - Even though God has blotted out our transgressions,
    - it does not mean that we will not be subject to His chastening as long as we are in this present age.
- In fact, we are told in Proverbs that it is because of His special love toward those who are His sons that He chastens us.
  - In other words, if you belong to Him, you are sure to receive his fatherly correction...
    - And though it is not pleasant, you should not for a moment suppose that He has rejected you because of it!
    - Instead, you should see it as a sign of His great love and acceptance of you as His own children...
      - Proverbs 3:11-12 says:
        - My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.
- So don't ever get the idea that God's redemption means no more suffering in the world.
  - When suffering comes, it is for you to remember that the LORD Himself is the One who blots out your transgressions, and who says to you, "I will not remember your sins."
  - God's forgiveness remains...
    - It is not to be measured by our circumstances, but by His promise.



3. The passage goes on in the next Chapter to tell us that even though we may be given up to cursing and reproach,
  - The LORD will nevertheless pour out His Spirit upon us to transform us and to give us hearts that love Him...
    - unlike those hearts that are so unresponsive to Him and that consider His service to be a wearisome thing.
    - He is going to bring real change to us through chastisement by the working of His Spirit...
      - And then we will come to Him much more eagerly and appropriately.
      - But this is our topic for next week when we look at redemption from the presence of sin.
  - As we conclude this week, let us rejoice in the redemption we have from the guilt of sin...
    - that even though we have such great transgression before our God,
      - He Himself is the One who blots out our transgressions...
        - all of them—
        - And that this forgiveness can never be called into question, even when we are delivered over to exile for our sins.
          - God has received us in Christ and in Christ has made us righteous.
          - Where sin abounded, grace far more abounds!
            - Blessed be His glorious name forever!