

Series: Isaiah

Title: God's Chastening, Comforting Gospel

Text: Is 44: 9-28

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Subject: God's Chastening, Comforting Gospel

Proposition: The gospel of God's grace in Christ is the one message by which God renews, chastens and comforts his erring child.

Remember, the context. God's elect in Israel and Judah had sinned. We have been hearing the message our heavenly Father blesses to renew, chastens and comfort his people.

The Lord begins by showing the absurdity of idolatry. We know the ten and a half tribes had made an idol away from Jerusalem and stopped coming to the Lord's house.

Isaiah 43: 24: Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

So, the Lord sends Isaiah with the Lord's word declaring the absurdity of idolatry.

Isaiah 44: 9: They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable [desirable] things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10: Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?

The Lord is declaring the absurdity of making a graven image. But even the man who does not have a graven image, who imagines a god who will accept him due to the works of his hands. That man worships an idol the same as the one who makes a graven image.

Isaiah 44: 11: Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. 12: The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13: The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14: He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. 15: Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16: He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19: And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20: He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

We are to have no graven images: no gold crosses, no images of a man or even an animal, none. But a man may abhor all graven images, yet, if he trusts that he is righteous because he has no idols and keeps the law outwardly then he is an idolater. He is worshipping the works of his hands the same as the man who has a graven image.

Also, a man may know we are not made righteous by law-keeping. He would not submit to circumcision and being brought again in bondage under the law. He knows the five points of Calvinism. He looks to his

knowledge and looks to the fact he knows we are not saved by the law. But he thinks this makes him accepted of God. He is an idolator the same as the man who makes a graven image, same as the man trusting in his law-keeping.

Galatians 5:6: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love...15: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but [being made] a new creature [by Christ]

What is the message by which we are made a new creation? By which this renewing work is continued. We see it in our text.

REMEMBER OUR FORMER IDOLATRY

Isaiah 44: 21: Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

When the Lord chastens his child through the preaching of the gospel, Christ brings us to remember our former idolatry. Here are two reasons:

One, remember you were an idolator before God called you. And remember, your old Jacob-nature is still sinful idolatry--"*O Jacob and Israel.*" In our sin-nature we are still Jacob. It is in Christ our Israel, with Christ abiding in our new man, that we are Israel.

Two, remember whose you now are--"*for thou are my servant.*" Bow and worship the one true God whose servant you are. Do not worship any idol nor look to any works of our hands.

Three, most importantly, remember your former idolatry, not to become puffed up, not to boast that you made yourself to differ from idolaters. But God says remember, "*I have formed thee; thou art my servant.*"

Isaiah 43:1: But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine...7 *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

The gospel of God's grace is the one means God uses to correct his children. Nothing breaks our heart and humbles us at Christ's feet like the Spirit of God bring us to remember we did not chose God, he chose us by his grace; we did not sanctify ourselves, he separated us; we did not form ourselves, he created us.

Jeremiah 1:5: Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Romans 8:29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

God corrects us by magnifying his grace to us in our hearts, "*thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*" In the verse before, when reminding us we still have a sin-nature, in addition to a new man, he called us Jacob and Israel. But this time, when declaring that he shall not forget us, God only calls us *Israel*, "*O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*" In Christ, God remembers our old man of Jacob no more.

FORGOTTEN BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Isaiah 41: 22: I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Before God, before his law, God forgets our old man "Jacob". God only remembers us as "Israel" Why? "*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.*"

Christ is Israel. It means as a prince thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed. That is Christ. He is perfectly righteous and perfectly holy. As a Prince, Christ has power with God and with men and hast prevailed with both.

But on the cross, our Substitute took the place of God's elect as Jacob. By Christ's blood, God blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. In Christ crucified, our old man Jacob died under the justice of God so God has forgotten our old man Jacob with all his sins and iniquities. In Christ crucified before the law, God remembers our old man of Jacob no more.

Romans 6: 6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, [before the law] that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed [justified] from sin.

But in our risen Savior, and by Christ being formed in you, his saints are a new creation. We are Israel because we are one with Christ our Israel. It is Christ our Israel in you who is the hope of glory

Romans 6: 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

It is God renewing our inward man by this message that we are made to put off the old man and put on the new. It is only by the gospel by the Spirit renewing our inward minds, our new minds. God corrects by the Spirit of God renewing us in the new man. He quickens us with this good news of God's unchangeable love and grace, "*O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*" Then God speaks in power into our hearts and says, "*return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*"

Now, let's apply this to ourselves. Since we have an old nature, we are prone to idolatry. All sin is idolatry be it religious sin or immoral sin. In this passage, God is speaking to his elect, redeemed, born-again saints because at this time they were guilty of idolatry.

Isaiah 43: 22: But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel....24: Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

We see here how God recovers us from our idols--our sins and iniquities--from the works of our own hands. We see here how God keeps us worshipping only him in spirit and in truth.

He renews our inward man and shows us the absurdity of idolatry then speaks effectually into our new man saying, "*Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art MY servant.*" He renews our inward man, reminding us, he alone made us to differ, "*I formed thee.*" He renews our inward man, reminding us, we are his servant and shall never be forgotten of God, even though we have sinned, "*thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*" He renews our inward man, reminding us he is just to show us mercy and recover us because "*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.*" Then his command comes effectually into our new hearts, "*return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*"

You have heard me say time and again, there is no discipline like the discipline of forgiveness for the sake of Christ. There is no discipline like the unchangeable mercy and grace of God for the sake of Christ. That is the message by which he renews us.

Hebrews 9:14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

THE EFFECT OF HOLY SPIRIT RENEWING

Isaiah 44: 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

This is the sure effect of this renewing, chastening, preserving work of our God. The Spirit of God brings us to truly worship God from the heart.

We become saddened, despondent, and no one can renew our hearts, not even ourselves. But by this work of God's grace and power, God puts the new song in our new man.

Isaiah 42:10: Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise from the end of the earth,... 12: Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

What is the message of this new song? "*For the Lord hath done it*"--"*for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*" The Lord alone has done it--"it is finished!" Our triune God in Christ alone redeemed his people. He alone glorified himself in Christ our Israel. God alone glorified himself in the hearts of his chosen in regeneration and by continuing to renew us. The whole work is his. Salvation is of the Lord.

Hebrews 1: 3...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

John saw the elders bow down and heard them sing to the Lamb,

Revelations 5:9: And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Our sin afflicts us. We cannot deliver ourselves from it, only God can. Paul said, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." Only God works this renewing work in our heart. And he only does it through the gospel of God's free grace in Christ. He does not do it by preaching law. When God blesses the gospel to our hearts, it causes us to mourn our sin. But hearing how Christ accomplished our warfare and rewarded us double for all our sins. By that same message he comforts us in our affliction.

Isaiah 49:13: Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

This is why God charges us to preach no other message! God commands us,

Isaiah 40: 1: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2: Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins... 11: He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

When a brother falls, as Israel did here, do what God sent Isaiah to do here. Keep reminding them it was God's grace that called us out of idolatry and formed us. Remind them Christ redeemed us so that our old Jacob is crucified and God remembers our sin no more. Remind them that God never forgets his Israel because he blotted out our sins as a thick cloud. Pray to the Lord to bless the word. But wait on him. It is the LORD alone who quickens and confirms the message in our hearts.

Isaiah 44: 24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25: That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; 26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28 That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Amen!