

God's Name

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[0 : 00] Isaiah 43, we read at verses 6 and 7, I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Now we see in the context of this chapter that the Lord is seeking to assure his people that despite the sufferings that they will and do go through, he has not abandoned them nor forgotten about them.

We see this in the opening verses here. But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. You notice not only there is the recognition of danger and difficulty that the Lord's people will and do face, but there is the promise that these dangers, though they will be frightening and perhaps harmful to an extent to them, will not overcome them.

[1 : 27] They will pass through the fire, but they won't be burned. Whether or not they might be scorched or singed or be very conscious of the heat and the fearfulness of it, they will not be burned or at least not burned up by it.

They will pass through the floods, but they won't be drowned. They won't be overwhelmed. They may be coughing and spluttering and fearful as they do so, but they will not be destroyed by it. Why? Because, the Lord doesn't say, because you're such good swimmers, I've made you that. Or because you're fireproof, I've made you of asbestos. That's why you can't be touched.

It's nothing to do with their virtues or strengths or abilities. However good they may be, however well made they are, but rather what he says here, For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

That's why you won't be overcome. That's why you'll be preserved until the end. Because the Lord has a desire and a plan for those who are His.

[2 : 29] And His plan and desire is to gather them to Himself and delight in them and rejoice in them. I will say to the north, give up. To the south, do not withhold.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

He wants those who are His. Now, one of the things, of course, that is a delight for many people at this time of year is when families tend to come together.

We have to be mindful that there are some, of course, who may be on their own. And we have to make every effort to include them in our gatherings. But particularly as I get older and people say to me, Oh, what would you like?

You know, what would you like as a present? I cannot think of anything. Because it's past the stage of wanting toys and so on for this time of year. But rather, what I do delight in is having family together.

[3 : 32] What I do delight in is having children and grandchildren round about. Having them gather in one place. We know it's only for a little while. Because they all have their own jobs and their own lives and their own homes to go back to.

And they've got their own bills to pay and their own worries and their daily tasks and their work and their studies. And they all have busy lives. But for a little while, to have them all with us together in one place is a delight, particularly as we get older.

It's not something, of course, we should be unrealistic about. Of course, there's going to be tensions in different members of families. There's going to be difficulties across generations and how we do things and what we want to watch or whatever the case may be.

But all these things are far less. There is the delight in having them together. And as families expand with the generations, you'll find, of course, that the families are, of course, called by the same name.

And the Lord delights in those who are called by His name. And His ultimate delight is to gather to Himself those who are His, not just for a little time at one particular period of festivity or remembrance, but rather for all eternity to have His children gathered to Him.

[4 : 51] And He will bring them from the south and from the north and from all the corners of the earth. And we read of that in the New Testament that when our Lord comes back, He says He will send His angels and gather His elect from the four winds wherever they may be scattered, wherever they are.

He will bring them to Himself. He will draw them to Him and will be gathered to meet together with Him in the air, as we read in Thessalonians there. And so this is God's plan to have His children around Him.

Those whom He has not only begotten spiritually, but He has caused to be brought forth into the world in their generation. He has caused them to be given the name that they have.

Parents think they choose their own children's names. But who puts it into the heart of the parents what to choose, what to call their children. We are each named because that is the Lord's desired name for us.

Because He has a desire to gather to Himself His children from all corners of the world. Different skin colors, different languages that are native to us, different backgrounds.

[5 : 57] But He delights in that rich diversity of His own family. Now we know that Jesus Himself, of course, was not married.

We know that Jesus had no physical children of His own. And yet we read, if we were to turn to Isaiah 53, on a few chapters, we would see that it says that He would see of the anguish of His soul.

Out of the anguish of His soul, He shall see and be satisfied by His knowledge. Shall my servant make many to be accounted righteous? He shall bear their iniquities.

I will divide him a portion with the many. He shall see His offspring. He shall prolong His days.

When His soul makes an offering for sin, He will see His offspring.

As the authorized version puts it, He shall see of the travail of His soul, those whom He has brought forth into the world. And He will be satisfied. He will delight in them as the Lord delights in His children.

[6 : 59] Now, we know, of course, there's that passage in Hebrews that says, you know, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Lord on high.

And that joy that is set before Him is, as it were, to have a preview, to see, as it were, beforehand, and a foretaste of all those who were the Lord's, redeemed out of humanity, gathered around Him, gathered around His throne.

He delights in His family being brought together. Now, of course, we know, as we said with the children, not every single person who has the name of the Lord put upon them is His.

Not every single person who was baptized, particularly in our former age when it was very common, and almost everybody did it, but not necessarily everybody followed up on the promises that they made.

It doesn't follow that every single person who's been outwardly brought within the family of the Lord's people is necessarily the Lord's. But that opportunity and that invitation is there for every single one.

[8 : 07] That invitation to be the Lord. Christ is there for every single one, baptized or not. That we should come within His family. That we should receive that sacrament, that ordinance.

We should be named as His. And He invites freely. There are no barriers to becoming the Lord's except that we put our trust and our faith in Him.

Why? Because He alone is able to take away all the barriers. He is able to take away all the sin. He is able to take away all the baggage of the past.

But only He is able to do that. We can't do it ourselves. And it doesn't matter whether our past has been as a drug addict or a down and out or an embezzler or a previously a convict or whatever it may be.

Or simply somebody very, very ordinary. It doesn't matter. There is no barrier to anyone. God is not going to say, well, you know, you're really not spectacular.

[9 : 10] You're not a high achiever, an A-lister on the one hand. Nor is there any glory in dragging somebody out the gutter who was really at their wit's end and who had completely ruined their lives.

I mean, you haven't done that. You're just dead ordinary. That was one of my problems in a former stage of my life. I could see why the Lord would want the spectacular, superstar high achievers.

They're really godly. They're really spiritual. I could see why he might want the criminals and the drug dealers and those who had been really evil and wicked in their lives because to take them out of the gutter and from the darkness, that was glorifying to God.

But me, I was just dead ordinary. I was just an ordinary commoner garden churchgoer. There was nothing specially wicked outwardly in my life, plenty of sin within.

There was no great big achievement on the one hand. There was no great big standstill on the other. I was just plodding ordinary. Why would the Lord want anything to do with the likes of me?

[10 : 08] But you see, if you're a parent, you look at, let's say you had ten children. Most people don't have ten children nowadays, but let's just say for the sake of argument you had ten children.

Would you love them all the same? Of course you would. Some of them might be very well behaved and some might be little monsters. And some might have extremely good gifts with whether it might be painting or artwork or maybe mechanical or some might be exactly knew what it was you wanted on a day when you were really tired and they brought you maybe that cup of tea or that blanket for your knees or whatever it was and they were really caring and really compassionate.

Others might be really academic. They'd all have different gifts. And some of them would try your patience greatly. And some just might be quite ordinary or middle of the road, but every single one of them is yours.

And because every single one of them is yours, you love every single one of them just the same.

And you don't love one of them more because they're a high achiever at school. And you don't love one of them less because they struggle a wee bit in class.

And you don't love one of them less because sometimes they're really badly behaved and they're the little monster in the family. And you don't love one of them more because they're far more affectionate or give you hugs or whatever a lot more.

[11 : 23] It's maybe easier to receive their affection, but you don't love them or you love them all the same. You want them all around you. And when it comes to this time of year, you would want them all and their families and their loved ones.

You want them all around you at such a time because they are yours. Not because of their gifts, not because of their behavior, not because of how they were as little children or what they've achieved in their lives, but because they are yours.

And as it is with us, so it is with the Lord. They are called by His name. They are those who He has redeemed and He desires them.

He wants them to be with them. He wants them to be His own. And whilst it is hard for us to think, well, why would God possibly want me? If you can ever figure out God, then you're only fooling yourself.

You and I, we cannot plumb the depths of the divine mind and what He understands and what He knows from all eternity. He knows things we will never know. He knows things about you that you couldn't even imagine.

[12 : 30] He knows things about me that would make my blood run cold, I'm sure. But the Lord, nevertheless, loves His children and has given Himself for them and He has put His name upon them.

That is part of the privilege, part of the joy of having the Lord's name put upon you. That is what we do in the sacrament of baptism.

Yes, we name the child, but it already has its name. And we put the Lord's name upon him or her, but if he or she is already the Lord's, they already have His name written in their hearts and written in the Lamb's book of life.

You know, it says there in the book of Malachi, as you know, that it says that then those who fear the Lord spoke with one another and the Lord paid attention and heard them and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed him.

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

[13:41] Now that book of remembrance, the Lamb's book of life has been written from all eternity. And it says, I think it's in the prophet Ezekiel, I might be remembering wrongly, it says, you know, the judgment was set and the books were opened.

And when those books are opened, yes, it says in Revelation, remember, how we'll all be judged out of the things that are written in the books. But then another book is opened, the Lamb's book of life.

And anybody who is not in the Lamb's book of life is going to be lost. They're going to be lost because the things that are written in the other books, which will tell the story of their lives, will condemn us ultimately.

I don't like to reference other religions. I may have done so in the past with this particular illustration. But I like this illustration even though it's from an Islamic tradition.

And it says, you know, when we stand before the Lord at the last day, the book of our life will be opened and it will be found written in our own hand.

[14:45] Now that conveys a truth, which although it's not in God's scripture, I realize that, it conveys a certain truth there that when the book of our life is opened and the Lord judges perfectly from everything that is written there, it will be, as it were, in our hand.

The choices we made, the decisions we took, the things we did, the words we spoke, it will all be there before us. And you and I both know that if our life is set out before the all-seeing gaze, even of the world, let alone of the Lord, we just want to run away and hide.

We just want to just dig a hole and hide in it. And the Lord uses illustrative language in scripture to speak about that. He says that people will say to the mountains, fall on us, cover us, hide us deep in the mountains from the gaze of the Lamb that sits upon the throne.

We cannot stand before His all-seeing gaze. We cannot stand before those piercing eyes that blaze with fire. There will be no hiding place at the last day.

The only way that we can ever pass through such convulsions of earthquakes at the last day and mountains wanting to fall upon us and us wanting to be hidden by them, the only way we can pass through fire and not be burned and through floods and not be destroyed is if we are the Lord's.

[16:11] When you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

And it's not enough for us just to sort of squirm away and back away and say, oh yeah, well if I'm not one of the elect there's nothing I can do. You don't know whether you are or not. You only know the free offer of grace that the Lord makes to every sinner.

You only know that when He opens His book to you He invites you to be within it. Now in a sense He holds it. You don't see what's in it. You don't see who's in it.

You don't see whether or not your name is written there or not but you do hear His open invitation. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

These are God's words of truth and God doesn't lie. If we don't come to Him we can't blame Him if we are cast out. If we don't come to Him when we're weary and heavy laden we can't blame Him for not giving us rest at the end of days.

[17:25] If we don't respond to His invitation that is our choice. And God is such a gentleman that He will respect your choice.

He will respect your choice in time and He will respect your choice for all eternity. If you and I want nothing to do with Him in time He will respect that and He will convey that into eternity.

You won't be made to spend an eternity with a God you can't stand. You won't be made to dwell for all eternity with a God in whom you do not believe. You believe in yourself and that's great.

It will be yourself alone that you have for company throughout all eternity in outer darkness.

Friends, it's a bit of a no-brainer in many ways.

The Lord gives us this free offer of great grace. He gives us this free offer of joy of a family gathered around its loving Father. He gives us this promise of belonging.

[18 : 26] And not everyone in this world has a family around them as they are just now. Now, Jesus Himself led an example of singleness of life.

Many people in this world are called either willingly or perhaps not from their own choice to singleness of life. Jesus wasn't married. Many people are not married.

Singleness of life is a noble calling. It comes with some advantages. It comes with other disadvantages. There are benefits and there is likewise a cost.

But whatever our state, whether we are in singleness of life or whether we are in a married state or whether we are widowed or whatever may be our condition and whether we have families or children or whether we do not, we are part of this family of the Lord's people both in time and in eternity if we are His.

We will be part of that family that gathers around His throne. We are part of that family that worships Him in the here and now. We belong with our Heavenly Father.

[19 : 35] We belong with our brothers and sisters in Christ, with our fathers in God and mothers in Israel, with our sons and daughters of Zion. We belong in the midst of this family, whatever our domestic situation here.

and this is another point I'd like us to recognize here. The importance of the name of God. I've been talking about that quite a bit but I want us to recognize that, you know, just as we'll be using a little bit later on in this service, there is what is called in Scripture the Aaronic blessing.

That is the blessing that God commands Aaron to bless the people with. At the end of Numbers chapter 6, read these verses. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel and you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them.

Now you'll notice what it says there. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up his countenance. Why three times? Why when the seraphim are in Isaiah chapter 6 there when they're standing before the throne.

[20 : 57] Why holy, holy, holy? Why not holy, holy, holy, holy? Why not seven times? Why not eight times? Why not ten times? Why not just once? But it's three times. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

God is a trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is Christ holy. He is Christ holy and the name of God and the power of God is conveyed in these Trinitarian terms both in the Old Testament and in the New.

The name of God is that which we know, we hear to our disgust, to our shame, to our sorrow. We hear it on the TV. We hear it in the street.

Blasphemed. Dropped like punctuation with blasphemy into almost every other sentence. Those who have no thought of God are quite willing to take his name as an expostulation of swearing. And every such use of God's name he will require at the last day. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Commandment number three.

[22 : 06] God will require the breakage of that commandment. But whilst we recoil with disgust, with horror, with shame, with sorrow from the wrong use of the holy name of God, I would want to encourage you to make right use of the holy name of God and to make more use of the holy name of God.

We tend to think of God simply as God, G-O-D. We tend less to think of him perhaps as Father or as Christ Jesus or as God the Holy Ghost, a much neglected person of the Trinity.

You know, when you are in distress, cry out to the Lord. Use his name aright. When you are in need, when you are alone, speak to the Lord. Use his name aright.

Use it humbly. Use it reverently. But use it. The name of the Lord, we're told, in Proverbs 18, verse 10, is a strong tower.

The righteous runneth into it and is safe. And I think, well, I'm not very righteous. No. But what does Jeremiah tell us? Chapter 23, verse 6. The Lord is our righteousness.

[23 : 25] It's not because I'm righteous or you're righteous. It's because God is righteous. We can run into that strong tower and be safe. That's what he says. When you pass through the waters, through the fire, you won't be overwhelmed.

You won't be burned because I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Friends, make use. Make right use of the name of God.

Use it in reverence. Use it frequently. Increase your prayer life. Even if it be not in formal situations. Even if it be not simply in family worship or times when the Bible is open and you're gathered properly to praise and pray to the Lord as you should.

Even if it be not times on your knees, at your bedside, that are in your closet. As you go about your work as well, as you drive upon the road, as you go out and you come in, let the name of the Lord be reverently on your lips.

Commit to Him that journey you drive, you take. Commit to Him the piece of work you're doing.

Commit to Him the figures you're adding up. Commit to Him the papers you're sorting in your office.

[24 : 39] Commit to Him the meal you are preparing in the kitchen. Commit to Him the floor you are scrubbing. And that is not to demean the holiness of the name of the Lord. It is to involve the Lord in every aspect and detail of your lives as you should.

This is what the Lord says through His people. Deuteronomy chapter 6, isn't it? That we should be praising the name of the Lord in your going out and your coming in and your down-sitting and your uprising. You should live and breathe and name the name of the Lord.

Let Him be the breath in your mouth. Let Him be the beat of your heart. Let Him be the reverence upon your lips. Just because the world may blaspheme the name of God right, left, and center doesn't mean that you should abstain from the right use of the Lord's holy name.

So I would encourage you, friends, use it more often. Use it more frequently. Use it in ordinary and everyday situations.

But make sure you use it aright as part of a prayer. As part of a prayer for God to bless and to keep and preserve you. And you might think that ordinary work and so on isn't something you need God's blessing and protection on.

[26 : 01] Well, how many times has somebody been at work doing a piece of work maybe wood or metal or whatever and then they cut their thumb or they slice their hand on a lathe or a saw or they hit their finger break their finger with a hammer.

How many times have people had accidents on the road which perhaps if that journey had been committed to the Lord. How many people suffer road accidents and horrendous injuries or death on road journeys?

Commit everyone to the Lord for safety. When you arrive safely at your destination it's God's protection. It's God's great grace. And you might think oh come on what about all the times I haven't prayed and I arrived perfectly safely.

So God is gracious. So God has been good. So God is better than you have deserved. That's not a reason not to thank Him. Not to take His name upon your lips.

Not to acknowledge Him. Not to praise Him. So take the name of the Lord not in vain but take it in reality. Take it in reverence. Take it upon your lips.

[27 : 05] Take it in your heart. Let it be part and parcel of every task you undertake. Every piece of work that you do. Because if your work is worthy and if it is right and good and wholesome work it is deserving of the Lord's blessing and help.

and if it is unworthy and inappropriate and something you'd be ashamed to be seen doing then not only should you not ask the Lord's blessing on it but you know in your heart you shouldn't be doing it in the first place.

So do that which is right. Do that which is honorable. Do that which is worthy and ask the Lord's blessing on it day by day. You see it's not just for these special occasions when we bring a child in to be brought within the covenant family of the Lord's people.

It's not just when the water goes upon his forehead and the name of the Lord is pronounced upon him. It's not just for those occasions that we use the name of the Lord or ought to.

It ought to be every day of our lives. It ought to be the food of our souls. You've all been to weddings. You've all no doubt been to baptisms before. Maybe you have special meals on these occasions.

[28 : 16] Maybe the family gathers for a special meal afterwards. Weddings. You have a big banquet and a hotel or whatever afterwards. If those were the only occasions in which you ever ate you'd be pretty hungry for most of your lives.

You don't just eat on those special occasions. You eat ordinary food every day. And you don't just bring the name of the Lord into these special occasions and sacramental times or even only on the Lord's days.

You should be doing it every day of your life. You should be consecrating every action and deed and peace of work to the Lord. And you should be naming his name upon your lips and in your heart reverently and rightly.

Because the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and is safe. So the Lord who wants those who are called by his name and who call upon his name to be gathered to him in their life, in their day, in their work, and ultimately in eternity.

He will find you wherever you are. He will draw you to him from wherever you are. There is no way you can go that is out with the reach of God's grace.

[29 : 26] And so the Lord says, I will say to the north, give up. And to the south, do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Called by my name, created for my glory, drawn to me for the delight that I take in the children that are mine. Let us pray.