

Formed By God To Praise God

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn for a little to the chapter that we read in Isaiah chapter 43, Isaiah chapter 43, and reading verse 21.

It's a wonderful statement really here. The people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

Now, as you know, God in his word gives so many great and glorious promises, and there is so much in God's word to encourage us, so much to lift us up, and we need that because as we journey through life, so often we face its challenges and problems and difficulties, and some days life is plain sailing, other days it most certainly is not.

And as Christians, we value so much God's word because so often when we go to God's word, we will find something there for us, and it just fits exactly what we're looking for.

And we say to ourselves, you know, that's exactly what I needed. And so God has set out so much for us, and that's why it's so important that we are in his word so much.

[1 : 2 3] Now, as we know, when we go through the history of Israel, they, of course, faced many problems. Sadly, many of the problems were of their own making, of their own doing.

And you just have to, for instance, look at Israel coming out of Egypt, making their way to the promised land. And you say to yourself, you made life so difficult for 40 years.

You didn't need to. But that was the nature. We talk about the nature of the beast, and unfortunately, it's our nature as well. Again, when you look at the history of Israel leading up to the captivity, they made things so difficult for themselves.

It didn't need to be like that. God was telling them, it doesn't need to. You don't need to go into captivity, but you're going to end up going there unless you mend your ways.

Now, before we actually look at this text, the verses following our text are really sad, because although God makes this wonderful declaration, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

[2 : 3 6] Yet, it's very sad reading, because we find that in the next few verses, that the Jews are failing terribly before God, because they're not calling on him.

They're becoming weary of him. They're refusing to bring their offerings to him. And it's very easy for us to tut us at work and say, you know, that's terrible.

Imagine God's people, and they're not calling on him. They're weary of him. They're not giving to him in the way that they should. But you know, always when we come to God's word, we have to turn it back in on ourselves.

We've got to shine the spotlight back on ourselves and say, right, I've got to be honest to you. Does this in any way apply to me? Do I come short in this?

And you have to say to yourself, do I go through my day? And I have to, at the end of the night, say, you know, I haven't really called on the Lord today. Or is it, could you go through two or three days and say, you know, I'm not talking to the Lord in the way that I should.

[3 : 45] Is it possible that there are times that you might find that being a Christian is a burden? And you're saying, the Lord says, it shouldn't be a burden.

It should be liberating. It should be freedom. It should be the very reverse to being a burden. And yet, sometimes, you see, if we lose the focus, if as Christians, we lose our focus on the Lord, and we find ourselves just doing things for the sake of doing them as Christian, then the joy goes, the liberty goes, the freedom goes, and it can become a burden.

That's what was happening to the Jews. And they were withholding, they were withholding the sacrifices. They were withholding what was the responsibility to give God.

And so, like that, we must always examine ourselves and see that every day that we're speaking to the Lord, we're engaging with the Lord, that our Christianity is a joy to us, not a burden, and that we're giving to the Lord, our lives giving everything that we have.

So, I want us to focus on these words that we have in verse 21. And it's really quite extraordinary, because it shows us here that God says, the people whom I form for myself, that they might declare my praise.

[5 : 11] The people that I form for myself. So, it's really quite an extraordinary thing. And if we strip it all the way back, we bring it back to the very start of everything, and we see the God who is always the same, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And before there were any yesterdays and todays and forevers in this world, before there was a world, before there was a universe, before there was anything, God was always who he is.

And that's important for us to lay hold upon, because we are reminded of how God brought this world into being, brought the whole planetary system into being, the sun, the moon.

He brought this through his creation. Go to Genesis 1 and 2. Do you know this? You're never tired of reading the account there. And what a reflection on our world.

That our world over the years spends millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of pounds of trying to find out how this world came into being.

[6 : 20] Trying to find out and make sense of the mystery of this universe. And they're doing it by taking Genesis out of the equation. By taking God out of the equation.

And they're always going to end up in the wrong place. Because if you start from the wrong place. Now I'm not saying, there's a lot of great stuff that's come out through all the exploration that's taken place in space and such like.

And I'm not saying that that in itself is wrong. Because it's the nature of man to want to know, to explore, to find out, to delve into.

And many of the great things that we have today have come about because of that. But when we're doing it by taking God out and taking Genesis out of it.

Then it becomes meaningless. And we will never arrive. People will never arrive where they want to arrive. Because Genesis, although there's still even in that so much that we cannot understand.

[7 : 25] We can't understand how God spoke into nothingness and said, let there be light. And there was light. Because you and I know when we have nothing and we add nothing to nothing, it still remains nothing.

Nothing times nothing is nothing. And yet God, who is God of everything. He's the God of the impossible. Spoke and said, let there be light. And he brought into being.

We've always got to remember it's one of the humbling things. That's from the earth that God formed and the dust of the ground. He made us from the dust of the ground. He made Eve from the bone of Adam.

He made the beasts of the field from the dust of the ground. We're told all these things in Genesis. But he brought all into being by the word of his power. And just as God formed this world and brought this world into being, he also formed a people for himself.

This was part of his purpose. And again, we always have the great questions. So when God made this world and he made it beautiful. And God, remember, as you go through Genesis, you will find God stopping at the end of every process.

[8 : 37] And at the end of every day, and he would say, it was good. When he made man, he said, it's very good. And people often wonder, so why did God, why did God permit this world to fall?

Why did he permit sin? Well, we can't. We can't go into the mind of God. And there's so much we cannot answer. But there's one thing that we can say from it.

That the way that God has remedied or provided a remedy in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are able to discover aspects of God's grace and his mercy and his forgiveness and his justice and his love in a way and in a manner that we could never have grasped were it not for the fall.

Even the holy angels were told that they look in, they peer in, as it were, into this whole way of salvation. There is still an element of mystery attached to it all as far as they're concerned.

So God, he has called and formed a people for himself. And it really is altogether wonderful to see that God has done this.

[10 : 03] And so, as we say, God formed this people for himself. And he began this by calling Abraham to himself. And then, as we know, there was Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And he changed the name of Jacob to Israel.

And, of course, these children of Israel, they became God's people. And all the time God was watching over them. And even when they were in captivity, even when they struggled, God was their God.

And he heard their cry. And he came to deliver them. And all the time God was leading them. When he took them out of Egypt, he led them all the way through the wilderness.

He gave them his word, the law. They were the keepers of the law. And God was going to bless all the nations of the world through his people.

That's a promise that he gave to Abraham. And we remember how the kingdom of Israel was set up. And there were times when that kingdom was altogether glorious, like in the times of David and Solomon.

[11 : 05] There were times that came so low, so weak, that, in fact, there was a period when, remember, Elijah, he actually thought he was the only believer left.

He thought he was the only one who hadn't bowed the knee to Baal. There were painful times, like the captivity. There were hopeful times, like the time of the restoration and the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem.

But all the time, everything was moving and moving and moving towards the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world.

And at the right time, it is termed the fullness of time, God sent his Son. And all the time, this was his purpose. He was having a people for himself.

And that's what he's doing still. He's gathering in a people to himself. Everywhere the gospel is preached, God is gathering people into himself.

[12 : 09] I hope today that even here, God is gathering somebody into himself. Right throughout this world, God is every day gathering people to himself.

And those that he has gathered to himself, he eventually gathers to himself in glory. Only those who want the Lord will end up in glory with the Lord.

You know, that's really how it is. When we have a desire within our heart for the Lord Jesus Christ, that desire is put there by the Lord.

If today you have never come to a place or a point in your experience and you say, you know, I don't know if I'm a Christian. I would love to be a Christian.

I actually really genuinely want to be a Christian. In fact, I'll go as far as to say there is nothing that I would want more in this life than to be a Christian, to come to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

[13 : 15] I would say to you, only the Lord can put that desire within your heart. That's not from yourself. And when that desire is there and you are asking the Lord that you might be able to become a Christian, you will.

God doesn't plant a desire to make fun of you or plant a desire to disappoint you. When God puts that desire in your heart, it is in order to fulfill that desire for you.

So if today you have never come to that sure knowledge of Jesus as your Savior, then today ask him that you may indeed come to that safe knowledge.

And unless the Lord has mercy on those who don't want him, then by not wanting him, then that's what the eternity will be as well.

For all those who die saying, depart from me to Jesus Christ saying, I don't want you. These haunting words will echo throughout eternity.

[14 : 25] Depart from me as well. So it's serious. God gives us what we look for or what we want in this life. But you know, when you look at this verse, the people whom I formed for myself, you say to yourself, what an honor and a privilege.

Have you actually stopped to think what an honor and privilege it is? If you're a Christian today, God has formed you for himself. Isn't that incredible?

Remember in the book of Esther, there was Esther, Mordecai, the Jew, and Haman was determined to get Mordecai put to death.

He couldn't stand him because Mordecai wouldn't acknowledge Haman. And you remember how Mordecai discovered this plot to assassinate the king.

And he told, he made this plot known. And there was this night the king couldn't sleep and he asked for the records to be brought. And he was skimming through the diaries and the records that were there.

[15 : 32] And he came across this and he said, see this man Mordecai who discovered the plot to have me killed. What's ever been done to Mordecai? What way of honor?

They said, nothing. Right, they said. Who's, and the next morning said, who's out in the palace yard? And they said, well, Haman. The king said, send Haman in.

And the king said to Haman, what shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor? And Haman, who was a great friend of the king, thought, oh, that's me.

So he thought, oh, the king, right. What would I like done to myself? So he said, I'll tell you what. Get the king's horse. Get the king's robe.

Get the king's crown. And put it on the man. And then get somebody to walk in front saying, this is what will be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

[16 : 33] Wearing the king's crown. Wearing the king's robes. And remember what the king said to Mordecai. That's good. Go and do that with Mordecai the Jew.

Haman's heart sank. But that's what happened. Mordecai was paraded through the city in the king's robe with the king's crown.

And there was the great cry, this is what is done to the man whom the king delights to honor. And you know something? That's what God is doing with you as his people.

Because he has put his royal robe. The robe of Christ's righteousness is draped over you. He has placed the crown of life on your head.

Which will one day become a crown of glory. And he has set his mark upon you. His love upon you. And he is providing for you.

[17 : 30] And he's doing for you in this world all the time. You know, when a person makes something, they make things.

Well, there's two main things that you, if you're going to make something. You're going to make it in order to use it. And that's what God does with us. He uses us.

Isn't that amazing? He uses us to serve him. He uses us to witness for him here in this world. He uses us as ambassadors for him.

You know what an ambassador is? An ambassador represents another kingdom, another country. Well, we are ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We represent him here in this world.

So God is using us. But when you make something, you don't just make it to use it. You make it to enjoy it. And so it is with the Lord that he enjoys us.

[18 : 32] He loves us. Now, sometimes we find this hard to understand. But you today as a believer are more special, more lovely, more precious to the Lord.

than all the power in every government of the world put together, and all the wealth out of all the vaults in all the different kingdoms of this world.

Put all that wealth and all that power and everything together. And if in some way we could be able to quantify it, it wouldn't come anywhere near the value that God puts upon you.

He loves you. He loves you with an everlasting love. He loves you so much that he gave a son to die for you. He couldn't do more than that.

That's how much he loves you. And you know, sometimes we find this hard to get our heads round. And part of the problem is because as we look in on ourselves, we see our failure, and we see all the things that are wrong with us.

[19 : 42] And we're so conscious of how we let the Lord down. And we're saying, how can he love me? How can he use me? How can he think highly of me?

And so we find it difficult. But we've got to go to God's word and to lay hold upon and appreciate what God's word is actually saying to us. Because as we said so often as we look at ourselves, we don't see very much at all.

You know, it's been said before that there are Christians that have the zeal of Elijah, but not everybody has a zeal of Elijah.

There are some Christians that have the courage of Daniel, but not every Christian has the courage of Daniel. Some Christians have the maturity and the understanding, like the Apostle Paul, but not every Christian has that.

And you see, not every Christian bears a hundredfold. Not every Christian bears sixtyfold. Some bear thirtyfold. But what is important is that you are bearing fruit.

[20 : 56] That's what is important. And you see, we all have different personalities, different dispositions. We all have different experiences. But the important thing is that we belong to Jesus Christ and that we live for him.

And then we see the purpose just in a moment. What God is looking for. He says, this people who I am formed for myself, that they may declare my praise.

Praise is absolutely key to our Christian life. Tells us in the book of Psalms, God inhabits the praises of his people. Think of that.

Where is God dwelling? Right in the center of the praise of his people. It is vital that we, every day, give part of our day to praising God.

Praise him for who he is. Praise him for his righteousness, for his sovereignty, for his rule, for his grace, for his love. When you begin to stop and think of all that we know of God, praise him for all these things.

[22 : 06] Praise him for who he is. Praise him for what he has done. When you think of what he has done. When you think of his creative acts. When you think of his redemptive work.

When you think of what he's done for you personally. And even supposing today you have not come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise him that you are in a place where his word is heard, where his word is preached.

Praise him that you can hear his word every day. These are wonderful things to praise him for. And as we know, God's house is a place where praise above all is made.

I think it's one of the things that we found hardest in lockdown. And particularly when we come back to churches, being stuck with these masks on and unable to sing. Because we were created to praise.

It's what we want to do. And there's something wonderful where the church of God comes together. And in collective praise where it comes from the heart and breaks forth in the lips.

[23 : 15] And I hope when we're able to sing again that every one of us will sing with all our heart. Maybe as we look back we say, You know, I took God's house for granted. Maybe I took the singing for granted.

Maybe I didn't sing the way that I should. You know, sometimes we can be a wee bit self-conscious or shy about our singing. And say, Oh, well, I don't want them to hear me. I'm not a very good singer.

So the best thing maybe is not to sing. Well, let's make sure that when we get back singing, that we will really sing. And give him the praise that his name and his honor deserves.

And that he is due. And so we seek to praise him by our life. By doing what he requires of us. By not doing what is forbidden.

You know, it's an amazing thing. It brings praise and honor to the name of God when we live in a right way in this world. Whether it's in our business, whether it's at school, whether it's in a nursery, whether it's at home, in whatever way, if we're living according to what God requires of us, that brings praise and honor and glory to his name.

[24 : 31] Let us seek then that every single one of us will live to the praise and to the honor and to the glory of his great name. And if you don't know Jesus yet as his Savior today, today he is present here.

He is where his word is. He's promised where two or three gather in his name that he's there in the midst. You ask the passing Jesus to stop in your heart.

And you know, if he stops in your heart to save, he comes to stay there through his spirit forever. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks for our short time together and pray that your blessing will be upon our word.

Take us all home safely, we pray, and do us good, cleansing us from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Our concluding item of praise is from Psalm 100, and this is from Sing Psalms, Psalm 100, from Sing Psalms, the whole psalm.

I want to say to the children here, the young children, you've been so good. It's a wonderful thing to see the little ones in God's house.

[25 : 55] It lifts their hearts. So may God bless you indeed. Psalm 100, sing Psalms, shout to the Lord with joy all who to earth belong. Adore the Lord with joyful hearts, and come to him in song.

Psalm 100, the whole psalm, and sing Psalms on page 131, shout to the Lord with joy. Shout to the Lord with joy, all who to earth belong.

Adore the Lord with joyful hearts, and come to him in song. Know that the Lord is God.

He made us as his own. We are the chief of our leaders.

His people is alone. His people is alone. Enter his peace with grace, His voice with thankfulness.

[27 : 17] Your gracious man, we sing to him, this day forever blessed.

For now the Lord is true, His voice ever sure, His constant truth and faithfulness Through every age and true.

Just to remind again to remember social distancing on the way out, and also there's hand sanitizers at the doors to be used as well.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.