



**Isaiah 43: 1-2**

**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.**

**Romans 8:15-16**

**For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:**

**Message Title:**

**“I Belong To Jesus”**

**I**f our walk with God is ever going to have substance, then we must grow up, we must mature, we must eventually come to the place where what God has said about us has taken precedence and become more real to us than anything that we might think, see or feel. Because sometimes we don't *feel* loved by God. We don't always *see* the acceptance of God. And if we're not careful, our circumstances and situations can sometimes cause us to believe that we are everything other than a child of God.

But I hear God saying to Israel here in the 43<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the book of Isaiah that it does not matter what you may be going through, it does not matter how you might be feeling at this particular moment, it does not matter how you may have failed, I have not disowned you, I have not disinherited you. I have not cast you off. If you are one on today who has confessed with your mouth and believed in your heart that Jesus is Lord, Thou art mine. You belong to me. Look at somebody if you will and say, “I belong to Jesus.”

God begins his statement of comfort to the nation of Israel here in Isaiah 43 with the words, "But now..." and those two words automatically arrest our attention and cause us to shift into reverse, so that we might investigate in an effort to understand what has transpired before. What we read in the concluding verses of Isaiah 42 give us much insight into the current condition of Israel. God calls them "a people robbed and spoiled," and they themselves declare that it was "the Lord, against whom we have sinned" who "gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers." In other words, Israel has messed up! They've blown it, and now they are dealing with the consequences of their sin. Now they are undergoing the chastisement of God. Now they are facing wrath and judgment from the very one who had chosen them out of all the nations not because they were the greatest of the nations, but simply because He loved them. Because of their disobedience, Israel is getting a whipping, and right in the middle of that whipping, their loving Father declares, "But now!" Oh, I don't know about you, but I thank God for a "But now!" I'm so glad that only God can have a licking stick in one hand and a "But now" in the other! Isn't it just like God, when it seems like all hope is gone, when it looks like you've used up all of your chances, you've blown all of your opportunities, you've gone down for the last time, and the devil is laughing, 'cause he's thinking, "I've finally got him! He's really done it this time, and ain't no way in the world that God is gonna take him back." Isn't it just like Jesus, that at the very time when you're feeling all filthy and dirty and ungodly and unholy that something down on the inside of you begins to speak to you and say, "Rise up, sister! Get up brother! Be not afraid, for the best is yet to come!" "C'mere, Peter, and feed my sheep! I know you messed up...but I've got another job for you!" I don't know about you, but I just love how just when I need it to the most, the Spirit of God bears witness with my human spirit that I am a child of God! Somebody look at somebody and say, "I belong to Jesus!"

Now it would be easy for us to take this story, and to make it all about Israel. Then it would be just another story, and as such, it would be unable give us the empowerment that we need right now. But I believe on today that this is your story, this is my story, so if this story is to have any kind of life changing effect, we've got to put *ourselves* in there, we've got to let God speak to us through the words that He speaks to Israel. First of all, as I look at what God says to Israel, and I put myself in there, I find that first He calls me Jacob, and then He calls me Israel. Now why does He do that? When He calls me Jacob, He causes me to launch into some Bible study in order to find out what kind of person Jacob was. And I find out that Jacob was the trickster, Jacob was the schemer, the con man, the thief, the Slick Sam, Freakin' Freddy, Jumpin' Jimmy, Iceberg Slim type of fella that I was before I came to the Lord. As a matter of fact, I've been Jacob a few times even after that. So when He calls me Jacob, He's speaking to my *humanity*, the weak part of me, the needy part of me, and he's also speaking to my *history*. He's speaking to the past, and in some aspects, because I'm still in process, the present me. He's telling me that it does not matter what I was, or am right now, because "the lamb was slain before the foundation of the world," and therefore it's all right, 'cause He already had me fixed before I ever got broke.

And then He calls me Israel. And when he calls me Israel, I become conscious of the fact that he's speaking to my *destiny*. Aw, man, that's awesome, 'cause now He's telling me that He's got me covered both *coming and going*. When He calls me Israel, He's reminding me of His promise. He's reminding me of the covenant that I have with him through Abraham. He's saying that even though the devil thinks that he's got me over a barrel right about now, He will *still* bless them that bless me! He will *still* curse them that curse me. He will *still* multiply me as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the shore! He will

still cause my seed to bless all of the nations of the earth! When He calls me Israel, He's speaking to the *nation* down on the inside of me. He's letting me know that even though things look bad right now, even though I am undergoing God's disciplinary process, that I ought to be determined that I will not die until I see my nation. Look at somebody and say, "don't you die until you see your nation!"

God then tells Israel, and thus you and I to "fear not." "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear..." We're living in some scary times. I believe that the times in which we are now living are the scariest in the history of humanity. Not only that, but some of the stuff that we're forced to live around and with and under, is because we, like Israel, have made some bad choices. It's *scary*, I tell you, but God yet says, "Fear not." Fear not because there's been a word spoken over your life, and you can't leave here until it has been accomplished. Fear not because I made a promise to you, and I cannot lie. Fear not because even though you may be going through some rough stuff, like Israel, the time will come when you will begin to see the peaceable fruit of righteousness come forth...in your life. So don't you be afraid...for I am with you. And if I am with you, that makes all the difference...in the world. Who can stop you... if I am with you? Who can hinder you...If I am with you? What can overtake you...If I am with you? What water can drown you... what fire can burn you... what weapon can kill you...if I am with you? So fear not, o child of God...because you belong to me. And I'm not gonna allow anything...or anybody...to damage my property! Look at somebody and say, "I'm God's property! I belong to Jesus!"

And then as I get ready to close, God tells Israel...that thou art mine. You belong to me. But before he does that, He tells them 4 things that validate His ownership, not only over

Israel, but over you and I. He says these 4 things (and not necessarily in this order):

- I. I *created* you
- II. I *formed* you
- III. I *called* you
- IV. I *redeemed* you

First of all, it was I...who *created* you. I am Elohim. It is I who have made you...and not you yourself. It was I who stood in Eternity and spoke to myself declaring “let us...make man...” and when I made you...I made you fearfully...and I made you wonderfully. And the psalmist said, “...and that my soul knoweth...right well...” It sounds wonderful when we read it, but I would have to ask you on today, do you know God...as your creator. Do you know Jesus... as the One who reached down into the dust of the ground and with His own hands made you in His likeness..? and in His image, and then breathed the breath of life into you, that you might become...a living soul? And that if God would do all of that, He’s got to love you? Some of us look in the mirror sometimes...and we don’t like what we see. “I don’t like the shape of my head.” “I wish I was taller...” And these days...we’ve got a lot of boys...who wish that they were girls...and we’ve got a lot of girls...who wish that they we’re boys. But I’ve come to tell you, that God don’t make mistakes. When He made us, He knew exactly what He was doing. And when He made us...He made us out of love. And that’s why you oughtta like yourself. You ought to love yourself. Because you are the wonderful creation...of an almighty God!

And then...I *formed* you. In other words, I’m the One...who *processes* you. I’m the One...who refines you like silver...and tries you...as gold is tried. Yes...I’ve got to put you in some fire sometimes. But the fire is not meant to harm you.

**It's not meant to destroy you. But it's meant to purify you. It's meant to burn out of you...everything that's not like me. We must understand that God didn't save us just so that we can go to Heaven. But when God saved me, He did it so that I might become a reflection...of His glory. And it doesn't always feel good. It doesn't always look good. I didn't understand why momma died when I was four years old; I didn't understand why I had to struggle with alcohol...for so many, many years. I didn't understand why I had to be homeless sometimes, why I had to be poor sometimes, why I had to be rejected...and not accepted. But I heard...the Bible say... that "all things...work together for good to them that love God...to them who are the called according to his purpose. So it's all good! (Look at somebody and say, it's all good!) Because "I am confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I don't know about you, but I am persuaded...that the Lord will perfect that concerning me...and when He has tried me...I shall come forth as gold! Everything that I go through...is to make me more like Jesus! "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."**

**"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." He *called* us. And not only that, when He called us...by us name. Not by your nickname. Not by your street name. But by the name that he has given us from the foundation of the world...that we might be holy and unblameable in His sight. It does not matter how dirty you may have become once you got here, but the fact remains that He called you. And when he called you, He called you to purpose. He called you with a particular destiny in mind. Listen to what God says to Jeremiah. He says, "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.” In other words, when I called you, I called you to *do* something. I called you to *be* something. Your job is to stay here and find out what it is that I called you to do. That’s why we’ve got to learn to walk with Him, talk with Him, and drown out all the other voices that seek to draw out attention. It is only when you do that that you can hear the call...

And that’s why sometimes, you’ve got to tell the devil, tell the flesh, and tell the world, to “*HUSH!* cause Somebody...is callin’ my name...”

And lastly, God says that I’ve *redeemed* you. In other words, I bought you back. You might not have known it, but you were in the slave-market. You were up for sale to the highest bidder. Satan had obtained the rights to your soul when Adam let sin come into the world, and handed you over to the devil, who then put you up for sale. But it was I who bought you back. If you don’t believe me read the story of Hosea, whom I sent down to the slave market to buy himself an old beat-up painted-up, washed-up, used-up hoochie-mama, and told him to marry her. But here’s the good part: when he saw her, in her junk in her mess, in her filth, he *took her*. If you don’t believe...that I bought you back...read the story of David...how when he stood before Jonathan. How he stood before the king’s son, smelling like sheep, with mud on his shoes, and with dirt in his hair. But here’s the good part; when he saw him, he *loved* him. Well, brother preacher, those are good stories, but what does that have to do with me? I’m glad that you asked me that, ‘cause I heard...the Bible say...in Romans 5 and 8, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...” In other words, He bought me back...with on an ole rugged cross...He bought me back...with His blood...He bought me back...on Calvary...and that’s why...I belong to Jesus....