



• Forgiveness, then deliverance

The first part of God's rescue of his people is the forgiveness of their sins¹. Then he will send to them deliverance from the calamities into which they have fallen².

1 43:22-44:23

2 44:24-28

1. First God asks us to receive his complaint about our sins

1. First God asks us to receive his complaint about our sins¹.

22'Yet you have not called upon me myself, O Jacob. Indeed, you have become weary of me, O Israel!'

1 43:22-24

It all began (as our backsliding ways always do) with prayerlessness.

• The problems began with prayerlessness

23'It was not that you brought me sheep for burnt-offerings; it was not me you were honouring with your sacrifices. I have not made a slave of you, by burdening you with grain-offerings, nor wearied you with demands for incense.

24'You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offences.'

• Entangled in sin (despite religious routines)

There may have been plenty of religious duties fulfilled¹ but alongside the religious routine there were 'sins' and 'offences'. We may continue in a lot of religious routines while becoming prayerless and then becoming entangled in sin. Forgiveness will come to us, but God does want his people to admit what they have done.

1 43:23

• God wants us to admit our sins

2. God is ready to forgive

2. God is ready to forgive. His chastening had gone on for centuries. The Assyrians had come and gone. The Babylonians would come. Then the years of exile would partially purify the people. Eventually God would be ready to bring them to a new day with a new consciousness of sins forgiven. Now he gives the people a promise for that day.

• God promises to blot out sin

25'I, even I, am he who blots out your rebellions, for my own reasons, and remembers your sins no more.'

• He forgives not because of what we do but because of His nature

Sins will be 'blotted out'. The word is the one that would be used for wiping a surface clean, removing something altogether so that it no longer exists. He saves us and forgives us 'for his own reasons'. Our forgiveness does not come from what we do. It comes to us from events that have been brought about by God and that arise by the demands of his own nature. It is God's own nature that demands atonement and sacrifice for sin. It is God's being true to himself that leads him to demand that sin must be punished in a substitute.

• God demands that sin must be punished in a substitute

Yet God wants the sins to be admitted and confessed. He wants assured faith in his promise of forgiveness. He asks his people to review the past with him.

• Sin must be admitted and confessed

26'Review the past for me, let us together argue at law this matter; state the case for your innocence.'

• Ingrained wickedness in Israel – even Jacob was deceitful

Can Judah justify what had happened in the story of the nation? Can the people argue that they were innocent? It cannot be done! Wickedness is in fact ingrained in the story of Israel. Even their 'first father', Jacob, was full of deceit and craftiness. Then false prophets arose in the story of the land. As well as particular sins in the life of the people, the word of God was perverted.

• False prophets

²⁷*'Your first father sinned;
your spokesmen rebelled against me.'*

• Word of God was
perverted

As a result the people came under judgement.

• So the people
came under
judgement –
nation ruined
and leaders
disgraced

²⁸*'So I will disgrace the holy princes,
and I will consign Jacob to destruction
and Israel to scorn.'*

The sins of the nation eventually have consequences in national life. The upper-class leaders ('princes') fall into disgrace and the nation as a whole is ruined.

**3. God is
ready to give
Israel the Holy
Spirit**

3. God is ready to give Israel the Holy Spirit. Despite their waywardness, God is committed to them. They have been faithless, but he is faithful. He will forgive their sins, and he will pour upon them the Holy Spirit.

• God is faithful
and will forgive

¹*'Now then, listen, O Jacob, my servant,
Israel, whom I have chosen.
²This is what Yahweh says,
your maker, he who formed you in the womb,
and who will go on helping you:
Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant,
Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
³For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground . . . '*

• God's Spirit –
freshness and
vitality will replace
dryness

God's faithfulness is rooted in his choice of the people. They are his elect. 'Jacob have I loved', says God. He is the Creator of his people, as well as the Creator of the universe. His Spirit will be given to them and the dryness of their lives will be replaced with freshness and vitality.

• Pentecost –
those who
received the Spirit
were Jewish

The Spirit is promised to the nation. On the Day of Pentecost everyone who received the Spirit was Jewish. The Spirit was being given to believing 'Israel'. Only later were gentiles added to the 'remnant' of Israel. God's spiritual 'Israel' consists of believing Israelites plus believing gentiles.

• Later gentiles
were added to the
remnant'

*'I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.
⁴They will spring up among the grass,
like poplar trees by flowing streams.'*

• The gift of
the Spirit is
assurance of
salvation

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit? Judging by Isaiah 44:5 it is a gift of assurance of salvation. It leads immediately to a sure and certain knowledge that we belong to God.

⁵*'One will say, "I belong to Yahweh";
another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
still another will write on his hand, "I belong to Yahweh"
and will take the name Israel.'*

• Outpouring of
the Spirit –
consciousness of
our salvation

The outpouring of the Spirit leads to an immediate consciousness of who we are and to whom we belong. Our salvation is 'sealed' not only in itself, but also to our own consciousness. The Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God. As in the predictions of Joel (see also Ezekiel 39:29), removal of chastening is followed by a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.