

The Way is Through

Let's Go! #2 - Speaker Adam Purvis - January 5th, 2025 - Isaiah 43:1-3

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our series called "Let's Go," where today we explore the idea that we are called to go through difficulties at times. When Pharaoh and his chariots caught up to God's people, they faced destruction at the edge of the sea. The people cried out that God had led them this far only to see them perish in the wilderness. They didn't expect to hear what God said next:

Exodus 14:15-16 (ESV) The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to **go forward**. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may **go through** the sea on dry ground.

Notice when God said go that He didn't say go around, but go through. This seems to be the tendency of God with His people, to lead them through deep waters and not around them. We can truly see God when we go through the things He's called us to do. He shows off in those times.

Need: We like to go around though don't we? Church, we have a unique problem in our Christian faith in America. It is incredibly hard to have a growing spiritual awareness of who God is and what He does in our country. The reason for this is simple but surprising ... we have little to no challenges physically. Now I know there is sickness, injury, a broken relationship, or job loss but those are rare and you must admit in those times you turn to the Lord.

You see, in this life there will be difficulty (deep waters) either physically or spiritually. I am convinced that where there is greater physical difficulty the people turn quickly to the Lord spiritually and where there is little physical challenge the people struggle to see God. We are beyond blessed physically but this means we have to actively and intentionally pursue the Lord and His will. Church, our battle is spiritual way more than physical. But I want to see God move, don't you? Then when He calls us to walk through fire, we must go!

Trans: Some of us are asking God today, "Can I avoid those challenges, Can I just be a spectator, Can't someone else do the hard stuff?" But God wants to reveal Himself to us and change us in those times. When He calls you into deep waters will you pursue Him?

BODY: In Isaiah 43, the prophet shared an encouraging word from the Lord that His people could fearlessly go through the difficulties ahead as they pursue the Lord. We can fearlessly go where God leads us too. How can we fearlessly go where God leads? The text gives **three reasons** we can go where God leads us.

Read text: Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV) ¹ 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. ² 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. ³ For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

We Can Fearlessly Go Where God Leads because:

1. God will be with you.

EXP: The prophet Isaiah first reminds them that is God who made them and redeemed them and even called them so they need not fear as they go where He leads them. But He comforts them further by promising to be with them as they go.

"Created" (1) (בָּרָא, *bārā'*) - to create, shape, form. "Formed" (1) (יָצַר, *yāṣar*) - to form, fashion, frame; of original creation

"Fear not" (1) (יָרֵא, *yārē'*) - not fear or be afraid; not terrified

The ancient philosopher Seneca once said, "We suffer more in our imagination than in reality."

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"Redeemed" (1) (לָאֵל, *gā'al*) - to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman.

"Called" (1) (קָרָא, *qārā'*) - to call, call out, recite, read, cry out, proclaim. **"By name"** (1) (שֵׁם, *šēm*) - not just a group or some corporate call, He has called you by name, individually

"Pass through" (2) (עָבַר, *ābar*) - to pass over or by or through, alienate, bring, carry, do away, take, take away, transgress.

"Waters" (2) (מַיִם, *mayim*) - water, waters; of danger, violence. The NLT translates it, "deep waters." The Bible often uses this word for the seas and oceans; it's the word used for the divided waters in Ex. 14.

What if the way is too big for us? Then God promises to be with us!

"I will be with you" (2) (אִתְּךָ, *'ēṭ*) - with, near, together with; with (of relationship)

ARG: The Lord promises to be with His people as they go:

Joshua 1:9 (ESV) Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Christ also promises to be with us as we go:

Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age."

ILL: At my house we keep the soda in the upstairs fridge. At dinner time I often ask one of my little girls to run upstairs and grab me a soda for dinner. Sometimes it's dark up there and I've noticed that they will ask one of their siblings to go with them. Darkness is easier to face with a buddy.

Notice the text says "when you pass through the waters" and not "if." There is an understanding that in this life we will go through tough times, but when we are passing through them as God leads we have a buddy, an all powerful one at that.

APP: The call of God is not to pursue deep waters and jump in nor is it to avoid deep waters when God leads you there. It is simply when you are led through deep waters do not fear for God is with you. So don't avoid them when God has clearly led you there. Those hard conversations, those faithful times of service when its inconvenient, that big ask God made years ago that you put off. Church, fear not, face the deep ocean when God puts it in front of you and know that He is with you.

2. God will anchor you.

EXP: The Lord then says, "through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you." How is this different from the waters of the first line where He promises to be with us? These waters aren't like the deep oceans but like strong flowing rivers that could sweep us off our feet. God now promises that we will not be engulfed or swept away by the current.

"Rivers" (2) (נָהָר, *nāhār*) - stream, river (expectation the Nile, Euphrates, etc.); seems to imply strong flowing rivers, perhaps a heavy current.

What if the way is too strong for us? Then God promises to anchor us so that we aren't overwhelmed.

"Not overwhelm" (2) (שָׁטַף, *šāṭap*) - to wash, rinse, overflow, engulf, rinse or wash off; to be swept away, be rinsed out. God will empower you to keep your head above water and not drown.

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ARG: God has given us assurance of our place with Him

Hebrews 6:19-20 (ESV) "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf..."

In God, we will not be lead astray by all of the false claims of the world

Ephesians 4:14 (ESV) "...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

In God, we will not be swept away by the challenges of life

Matthew 7:24-25 (ESV) "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

ILL: We sometimes play this game in the ocean where we go out about chest high, lock hands, close our eyes and see if we could stay put through the waves. Every wave takes the little ones, they don't have enough weight to keep their feet down. The big ones sweep us all! The more weight to anchor you, the more current you can take.

APP: Some of you are worried that if you go where God leads that it will take you to a place that you don't wanna go, but the opposite is true. If you decide to reject the Gospel or if as a Christian you decide to sit the bench then the current of this world will carry you where you off into sinful or useless places. Christ is our anchor, without Him our lives are not only burdened by sin but meaningless.

3. God will protect you.

EXP: God promises to be with us, then to keep us and anchor us, and then the final promise that He will protect us. The destructive fire will not take us.

"Fire" (2) (אֵשׁ, 'ēš) - burning, fiery, fire, flaming, hot. "Suggests a military conquest in which cities are burned." (NAC: Isaiah) Where do you walk through fire? Where do you take risks for the Gospel?

What if the way is too dangerous? Then God promises to protect us!

"Not burned" (2) (כֹּהַל kāvâ) - to scorch, brand. This will not scar you or brand you or claim dominion over.

"Not consume you" (2) (בָּעַר bā'ar) - to burn up, consume. Or to destroy you.

"I am the Lord" (3) (יְהוָה Yēhōvâ) - "the existing One" the proper name of the one true God

"The Holy One" (3) (קֹדֶשׁ qāḏôš) - sacred (ceremonially or morally); (as noun) God (by eminence), an angel, a saint, a sanctuary

"Savior" (3) (יָשָׁע yāš'a) - to be liberated, be delivered; to be saved (in battle), be victorious

ARG: Those who seek the Lord will receive His protection:

Proverbs 30:5 (ESV) Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

This protection is a spiritual one, His protection is against the "flames" of the evil one:

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV) But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

ILL: Do you ever wonder what the three Hebrew slaves were thinking when King Nebuchnezzar had them thrown into the fiery furnace? I don't think they could have possibly imagined that God would show up in the

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way that He did, I believe they thought they would die for their faith. In that story we get the most dramatic form of God protecting His people through fire.

Our lives will likely be different, we aren't typically facing life and death like that or literal fire like that. So God protects us when we go through more symbolic flames. What if you knew that you couldn't lose?

I watched my favorite team play a football game this year after the fact where I accidentally saw the final score and we had won. Can I tell you that that was the most relaxing game I've ever watched. When my qb threw a interception I didn't stress, when the other team scored ... eh no worries. No the outcome changed the way I watched the game.

APP: Church, Christ wins! When He nailed our sins to that cross and got out of that grave, he sealed the victory. We know how it ends so we don't have to freak out in the fire. If you know God is leading you then walk right in that fire, He wants to show you something in there.

Or can you make the negative truth claim against God? "I don't think God can save my marriage." "My kid is too far gone for God." "I don't think he can save that friend or that relative."

Church would we say, "I don't think God can grow His church in Rocky Mount ... the soil is too hard fro Him ... the people too lost ... or I just don't think He can do it with our little church." If you can't say that, then you know its not true, so believe that He will reach the lost in this city and that He intends to that through you and through His church!

CONCLUSION: God calls us to go through, not around, not to avoid it, no He calls us to go through! He makes promises in the way through and I wonder if we would ever experience those promises if we don't go through. If His will is through and His promises are waiting in there then church let us go through knowing that:

- God will be with us.
- God will anchor us.
- God will protect us.

Let's pray!