

Blessing promised to all who come to God (1-5).

Just to be clear, Isaiah directs these promises to God's chosen people but Romans 11 makes it clear, by God's grace we Christians are grafted into these blessed promises. Romans says, *"And you, [Gentiles] though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root..."* Christians don't replace Israel as God's chosen people, they are grafted into God's blessings for Israel.

In these opening verses, God is reaffirming his affection and protection of his people. As Chapter 43 last week affirmed—he made us, he formed us and provides for us. His love and grace are lavished on us.

Because of this there is no grounds for fear, or frenetic worry and no need to look elsewhere for security and help. Again, this week we are reminded there is no need to fear, there is no reason to tremble. God made us and he's got us... no matter what?

Notice, at the end of verse 2, God refers to Israel as "Jeshurun." It's a term of affection meaning "upright one." It's used ironically here, but graciously. His point being, despite your failure, I am always faithful.

[Illustration] – Think about it this way; it's like a child who fails or disobeys but is not "un-adopted." They are still loved, cherished, and protected. You see, there is absolutely no fear of abandonment that is justified God. When he says, "I will never leave you or forsake you," he means it. Remember a few weeks ago I told you God's work is his word, is his person. When he says it...that settles it!! He's never gonna give up on you, run out of patience with you, or get tired of your feeble attempts to follow him.

Instead, verses 3-4 make it clear he's committed to nourishing you with everything you need to endure, bear up under, and ultimately overcome. He's committed to nourishing you, and your children and their children so they can thrive.

Pouring water on a thirsty land is imagery that anticipates the pouring out of his Spirit spoken of in John 7. This water, this Spirit will enable them to flourish like thick lush grass, and flourishing trees by a flowing river.

Verse 5 anticipates a kind of proud public confession of belonging to God. The extroverts will tell everyone. The introverts will let the ink of their tattoos tell the story. And those in middle will not shy away from letting their faith be known.

[Illustration] – Like a wedding ring—the sign of visible belonging. The people of God will be proud of their savior.

[Transition] – Having reaffirmed his possession of them, and his promises to them; he again reminds them he is their only rock and salvation. Read verses 6-8.

There is no Rock besides our God (6-8).

Here, Yahweh declares His absolute uniqueness. In the Hebrew: Yahweh says, “*Biladey Elohim*,” “besides me, there is no God.” He is king, redeemer, the first and the last. He alone declares the future. Again, he reassures us: do not fear—there is no other Rock. Notice Rock is capitalized because he IS IT! Our rock and our redeemer.

This is a theme he’s repeating beginning in chapter 40. And the repetition is so good because we are so prone to this truth and reality leaking out of our hearts. In all the shifting sands of life, we can remain anchored to our God who is our rock!

[Illustration] – When I get the chance to be at the coast, one of the things I love to do is surf fishing. You guys know this, but if you stand at the edge of the surf, it only takes a few waves, and your feet are buried in sand up to your calves. So, it’s a constant fight to keep your feet free so you don’t keep sinking or get stuck and knocked down by the waves. It’s a lot of work to stand strong and stay free of the shifting sands.

But if there is a rock nearby. It’s a whole other story. If I can stand on a solid rock, you can’t be moved. It’s solid footing. It’s safer. It’s less stressful and much less work. I don’t have to be worrying about all the shifting sand and keeping my balance. With my feet stable I can fish worry free. And it’s the

same thing in life. When your life is set on God your Rock, your life is much more stable.

[Transition] – Having firmly established himself as our Rock and our foundation. God then mocks the idea of idols. There is no absurdity greater than trusting in idols. Look at verses 9-20

There is no absurdity greater than Idols (9-20).

Isaiah uses satire to expose the absurdity of idolatry. A man cuts down a tree, uses a portion to cook his dinner, a portion to warm himself, and the rest carves into a god. Huh???

He's highlighting the absurdity of trusting in anything other than God, the one true and living God. The absurdity points to spiritual blindness. 2 Corinthians 4 describes spiritual blindness as something the enemy is able to do to people. He blinds their eyes so they cannot see truth about who God really is (2 Cor. 4:4).

[Illustration] – The absurdity points to self-deception of thinking that something has power to help you or strengthen you or protect you. It's like charging your phone with a cord that isn't plugged in. You think it's gonna empower you, but eventually you discover it's dead.

[Illustration] - God highlights the tragic irony of worshiping what you made with your own hands. All the detail about the crafting process emphasizes it's made up entirely by humankind. It's like a child making a paper crown and declaring himself king. Adorable when my grandkids do it while playing. Absurd when adults do it in real life.

Notice in the final verse of God's case he ends with a powerful metaphor. Verse 20 says, "He feeds on ashes." This is powerful metaphor for spiritual emptiness. "A deluded heart has led him astray."

The prophet Jeremiah describes the tragedy of trusting anything other than God this way, "*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*"- *Jeremiah 2:13*

Now, obviously we no don't carve idols from wood. Instead, we carve them from wealth, ambition, sexuality, nationalism, and self.

It will be uncomfortable, but we need to get more specific about this: What does trusting in idols look like for us today?

Ambition and achievement

We don't carve wood, but our ambition drives us to carve our worth out of performance. We think to ourselves:

- "If I can just reach that level..."
- "If I can just get that title..."
- "If people see me as competent..."

I want to be clear; ambition is not necessarily bad. But it becomes idolatry when:

- Success defines identity.
- Rest feels like sin.
- Failure feels like death or disintegration.
- Work becomes savior.

It becomes idolatrous when we take something useful (work, productivity) and ask it to save us. Our text says, a man burns half the log to cook his food and bows to the rest. We sacrifice our families on the altar of success and then ask success to give us a family.

Sexuality and Romance

Sex is a gift. Marriage is a gift. Attraction is a gift. But when they become ultimate, they become gods.

Modern idolatry says:

- "I cannot be whole unless I am desired."
- "If I don't have romantic fulfillment, I don't have life."
- "My sexual identity is my core identity."

Sex becomes an idol when we look to it to save us in some way or make us feel whole in some way. Sex becomes an idol when we take a good gift and ask it to bear the weight of meaning, purpose, and salvation. Asking romance to save you or make life worth living is like asking a candle to be the sun.

Nationalism & Politics

Love of country is good. Civic engagement can be commendable.

But it can become idolatry when:

- Our hope rises and falls with elections.
- Our outrage consumes our peace.

- We fear cultural loss more than we fear sin.
- We treat political opponents as ultimate enemies.

The idolater looks at wood and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god.”
We look at political power and whisper, “Save us, You are my hope.”

The Idol of Self

This is perhaps the dominant idol of our age.
Not bowing to carved statues —
but bowing to the mirror.

We say:

“I must be true to myself.”

“No one can tell me who I am.”

“My feelings define reality.”

We replace absolute truth, with “My Truth.”

Self-worship is uniquely blinding because:

- The worshiper and the god are the same.
- There is no higher authority to correct you.
- You cannot save yourself from yourself.

Technology & Digital Approval

Not inherently evil — but easily ultimate. Checking notifications like liturgy.
Measuring worth in likes and engagement. Curating identity for applause.

Isaiah’s satire fits perfectly:

We manufacture the system...then the system shapes us...then we serve it.

We hold in our hands a device we made — and it quietly tells us who we are.

Family as idol

For some...even our family can become our idol. Children are gifts. Marriage is sacred. But when family becomes our ultimate:

- Our Children become our identity.
- We sin and compromise to secure our kids’ success.

Here are some clarifying questions:

- What do you daydream about?
What do you worry about?
What do you sacrifice for?

That may be the log you are carving.

As God says, when we chase after other things to make life work for us, we feed on ashes, our deluded heart misleads us.

- Ambition feeds on ashes.
Sexual worship feeds on ashes.
Self-worship feeds on ashes.
Political messianism feeds on ashes.

None of it ever, ever satisfies

[Transition] – Knowing our proneness, what are we to do? As the ancient hymn admits, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.” So what are we to do? Thankfully, Isaiah finishes with an invitation. When you get distracted and turn from me...I invite you to quickly return. Return to me and be refreshed. Look at verses 21-23.

People, wisely return to your redeemer (21-23)!

God calls Israel to remember who they are and what He has done for them. He will never, ever forget them.

Verse 22 declares their sins have been swept away, literally “wiped clean, expunged, completely obliterated, blown away and restoration is again assured.”¹ The Hebrew imagery here pictures their dark clouds of sin, instantly blown away and vaporized by the sun restoring the clear blue sky.”²

And then the call to “Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

[Illustration] – I love the GPS mapping stuff that is available today on our phones. Directions to anywhere you want to go instantly. It’s crazy cool. But despite the clear directions, I make wrong turns at times. And full of grace, my little GPS voice says, calmly, “rerouting,” and it tells me how to get back on course.

This is what God’s grace invites us to do. When we get off course, distracted by something we idol or trust in more than him at that moment, we are instantly invited to return to him and get back on course.

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, “[1178.הקז](#),” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 498.

² Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 440.

[Transition] – Let me suggest some key implications/applications from this text.

1. Rest in God's Sovereign Grace

God says, "I have chosen you; I have made you, I have formed you, and I will pour out my Spirit on you and your offspring." Rest in God's grace-filled commitment to you.

Here's what that means for us: You can stop striving to earn what God has already declared true about you. Let your obedience flow out of your gratitude for God's saving work in your life.

2. Examine Your Idols

What do I look to for security?

What is it, if taken away, would devastate my identity?

What tends to drain out my emotional energy?

Here's something to remember: "What you fear losing most may be what you worship most." (Money, reputation, power, sex, control)

3. Return Quickly When You Wander

God says, "Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

Allow your repentance to be compelled by your love. Return to him because you belong.

[Transition] – Now, I want to give us a chance to actively respond to this section of Isaiah we've looked at today. I want to lead you in a kind of "Call and Response." I've pulled out a few of God's declarations to us from this text. And then I've written a response that we can declare back to him. So, I'll lead this and read the declarations from God which is the Leader part. Then we all as a church in unison can declare our response.

CALL AND RESPONSE

Leader:

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and her Redeemer: "I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God."

Church:

You alone are God! There is no other Rock!

Leader:

We confess we have trusted in the work of our own hands. We have looked to created things for comfort, identity, and control.

Church:

Lord, we confess: our hearts are prone to wander. We have taken what cannot save and asked it to be our savior.

Leader:

Return to Me, the only true God for I have redeemed you.

Church:

We return to You, O Lord.

Leader:

“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.”

Church:

With thankful hearts we celebrate. Our sins are forgiven! Our debt is removed!

Leader:

You are My people. I have chosen you. Fear not.

Church:

We belong to you Lord. We will not fear.

Leader:

“I will pour water on the thirsty land, and my Spirit upon your offspring.”

Church:

Pour out Your Spirit, O Lord. Make us and our families flourish for your glory.

Leader:

Who is like our God?

Church (bold, unified):

No one.

He alone is God.

He has redeemed us.

We are the Lord's.

Leader (quietly):

Church, who do you belong to?

Church (strongly):

We are the Lord's!!