

Be Mine

Isaiah 43:1-3 *"But now, this is what the Lord says— He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."*

One of the first emotions that grabs you from this passage is the sense of belonging - the feeling of being accepted. Look again at verse 1 **"You are mine."** In other words, *"You belong to me - I chose you."* But notice also, God precedes this statement with; **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name."** Quite literally, *"Don't be afraid, for you have been exonerated (let off the hook), and I have intimate knowledge of you because you belong to Me."*

A while ago I was listening to a message by Bill Hybels, the pastor of Willow Creek Church in Chicago, and he was talking about the family and the importance of expressing love to your children. He said that while his children were growing up, he'd like to tuck them in every night. So he'd go into his daughter's room and say *"If you lined up all the little girls in all the world, I'd choose you."* And then to his son's room, *"If you lined up all the little boys in all the world, I'd choose you."* Making them feel truly special – isn't that wonderful? But in this passage in Isaiah, God is doing exactly the same. He is making us feel truly special! God clearly conveys that we belong to Him; that He chose us; that He knows us intimately; that we are safe in His presence.

On this, Valentines Day 2010, I believe God is saying to all of you, **"You are mine – I chose you – so be mine."** God is asking you to be His precious beloved! Why? Because He chose you! It is a tradition to ask the one you love to be your Valentine (to be yours), but I want you to know that your love for another is but a pale reflection of the Father's love for you. The Father delights in everything you do. You are the apple of His eye – He can't take His eyes off any of you! When you come into the family of God, there is the feeling of belonging that comes with it; *"I have called you by name. You are mine!"* Worship is all about God making God your loved One. We often sing, *"You are mine and I am Yours,"* but have you really made the Lord your God?

God unashamedly declares - 'you are **mine**'. However, do we reciprocate? Do we make a conscious effort to belong to Him - to be His! The psalmist made God His own God... **"My God turns my darkness into light"** (Psalm 18:28). **"With my God I can scale a high wall"** (Psalm 18:29). **"From my mother's womb you have been my God"** (Psalm 22:10). **"In you alone I trust, my God"** (Psalm 25:2). **"My God, I called to you for help and you healed me"** (Psalm 30:2). **"My God; your law is within my heart"** (Psalm 40:8). And this verse I love, **"By day the Lord directs His love, at night His song is with me; a prayer to the God of my life"** (Psalm 42:8). Is God the God of your life, or do you have other gods?

When we come to worship, it inspires within us a sense of belonging. But it should also inspire within us a sense of trust. **"I trust in God's unfailing love - for ever and ever"** (Psalm 52:8). Not just trust that we belong to the Father, but trust that He loves us enough to care for us through trying times. Look at verse 2... No matter what comes along to test our faith, God promises to be with us. Often we declare God's faithfulness and are encouraged to remember that He loves and cares for all His children. But this 'inspired' trust must be worked out in our daily lives. Psalm 56:4 tells us to not be afraid of man, **"In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?"**

Let's be honest. These past few months have been difficult for many of you. Most budgets are tight right now, and I'm sure some of you are worried or fearful. Believe me, I know that each of us has his own personal difficulties – worries about job security, worries about the future of our children, worries about our health, worries about the care of our loved ones. With some of you, your income doesn't seem to cover your expenses, so how are you going to make it to next month? On top of that, I know that there are broader worries. Will there be another terrorist attack on UK soil, and will it be near us? All of these are valid concerns that occupy our imaginations.

However, when we abide in intimate fellowship with the Father, we have confidence in a God who is much bigger than all that. After all, we are living close to the same God who delivered His people through the Red Sea. The very same God who died and rose again. The same God who for four thousand years has preserved and cared for His beloved people. When **"we are His, and He is ours,"** we can experience His divine presence and be reminded of His mighty deeds of power, and consequently, we feel complete trust. We feel safe within our Father's care, and we know that mortal man cannot harm us.

Such inspired trust helps us develop the attitude that Paul had in Philippians 3:13-14 “...**This one thing I do. Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**” ‘Inspired’ trust enables you to stop languishing in the past or agonising over the difficulties of the present. True trust enables you to fix your eyes on the wonderful future that Jesus has secured for you.

Love is all about God – **God is love**. When we know that He **chose us**, it inspires within us a sense of belonging and a sense of trust. It also inspires a sense of awe. Look at verse 3; “**The LORD your God, the holy One of Israel, your Saviour.**” The name written all in capitals ‘LORD’ is the actual divine name of God. We’ve talked before about the respect and power that went along with that divine name. We’ve talked about the scribes who, when they wrote that very divine name, would break the quill they had been using out of respect. Only God is the **Holy One** of Israel. Holy means set apart for a special purpose. And that is, to be **your** God! When we talk of God’s holiness we mean mainly two things – the first is His absolute majesty. Meaning, He is not someone that’s subject to the dictates of a living being. He is completely **above** all things, and as such, He is stunning and glorious in majesty. The other part of God’s holiness is that God stands apart from everything that is evil and bad. Every last drop. He cannot stand the slightest evil – in thought, word or deed. Both senses of Holiness are pictured in Isaiah’s story of his call to ministry – he tells us about it in Chapter 6:3-7 (turn there with me).

Belonging, Trust, Awe, Conviction (among many other things). These emotions reveal a God that is both completely beyond us, and yet completely personal to us. Our God is both feared in His splendour and tender in His ever-loving care. This is a great paradox! An awesome all-powerful God, who rules and reigns in majestic splendour, has chosen us and declared openly that we are His. But such revelation does not arise until we approach God as our Heavenly Father. We can’t produce emotions of awe, true belonging and complete trust until we experience ‘intimacy’ in the Father-son/daughter relationship - intimacy founded on true **love**.

When God declared that we belong to Him (“**you are Mine**”), He was declaring openly that He loves us unconditionally. This is the God-kind of love ‘agape.’ And it’s the only love that never ever fails. When God says, “**be Mine,**” He doesn’t expect you to perform, or be perfect. He asks you to be His - as you are! Remember, God chose you first (*called you by name*), and then said, “you are Mine.” Notice, He chose you to be His, having already removed any penalty associated with wrongdoing, “Do not fear, for I have **redeemed** you.” Yes, God exonerated you with one purpose in mind, He wants you ‘to be able’ to become His beloved (His darling). He wants you to be able to also say, “you are **mine** – you are **my God.**” Can you see the divine circle of love that God has created? He first loved us so that we can love Him back. He first declared that we belong to Him, so that we can thereafter declare that He belongs to us. This is perfect love, and perfect love casts out all fear. This is why God starts (in verse 1) by saying, “**Do not fear.**” There cannot be any fear in this kind of relationship!

“Don’t be afraid, for you have been exonerated (let off the hook), and I have intimate knowledge of you because you belong to Me.” So, “**be Mine!**” The Darling of heaven wants you to be His! Accept this glorious truth today, and make a conscious effort to trust Him as you’ve never trusted Him before. Listen again to the Father’s heart...

*When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.*

.....So, be Mine!