

## GREATLY HONOURED BY GOD

In **Isaiah 43:1-4** the Lord says:

*“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. **I have called you by name; you are Mine.** When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your **Saviour.** I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are **precious** to Me. You are **greatly honoured**, and **I love you.**”*

This is probably one of the most encouraging passages of scripture in the whole Bible. It vividly expresses the deep and profound love which the Lord has for all His people. Notice the wonderful statement... *“I have called you by your name; you are Mine!”* Another translation says, *“I have claimed you; you are Mine!”* God can legally claim us as His own because He was prepared to send Jesus to pay ‘the price’ in order to secure our redemption. Notice also how God emphasises that we are precious in His sight - ‘*greatly honoured*’ and ‘*loved*’.

Furthermore, through the prophet Amos, the Lord declared that all the gentiles who are called by His name will be part of the restoration of the Tabernacle of David. *“In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be.”* (**Amos 9:10,11**).

This prophesy was forecasting the universal body of Christ becoming united in serving God. And according to ancient Hebrew custom, to be called by the name of anyone is to be regarded as a son or daughter. Therefore, it must also refer to all those who are to be included in the dynasty of David and considered children of God. Such a unique people will become a select community who have been given the ability to partake of the same divine Spirit. **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”** (Romans 8:14).

**Exodus 31:7** declares, *“Everyone who is **called by My name**, whom I have created **for My glory**; I have formed him, yes, I have made him - **He is mine!**”* We were created for God's glory! We were formed by Him and made by Him! “Made By God” is our label! He always knew us - even when we were in our sin! **Ephesians 2:10** says, **“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”** God has always known us by name, and our destiny has already been mapped out according to His will and good pleasure!

As a believer you should take comfort in the fact that God 'knows' you intimately - that He is on first name terms with you! The Psalmist had revelation of this, and in **Psalms 139** we hear him crying out to God saying, *“For you formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And the days fashioned for me were all written in Your book.”*

**Romans 8:29,30** says that God fore knew us. In other words, He knew us even before we were being formed. It also says that we were called according to His design and purpose, and predestined to be conformed to the likeness of God's Son! But **verse 31** ties it up nicely, and goes on to say, "*What then shall we say to all of this,*" or "*in response to this?*" To what? To everything that God has graciously planned before-hand and predestined for us! "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" Who would dare touch God's children - those whom He has called by name!

We are God's children - God's elect - *called by His name*. We have been chosen according to the fore-knowledge of our heavenly Father, through the justifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood (**1 Peter 1:2**), to be overcomers in this life! Why? Quite simply, because He LOVED us! Not only that, because He still loves us and greatly admires and honours us. We are the apple of His eye and whoever touches us touches the apple of His eye, and God will raise His hand against them (**Zachariah 2:8,9**).

While preparing this message I asked the Lord what was the one thing He would like to say to every individual living on the earth today. And this was His answer, "*If every individual was prepared to listen, and to hear My voice, I would say 'I love you'.*" God's awesome love for mankind is impossible to comprehend! "**No power in the sky above or in the earth below - indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (**Romans 8:39**).

Twice in the opening passage of the Book of Ephesians it mentions the "*good pleasure*" which God Himself experienced as He secured our redemption in Christ. When we became sons and daughters of His, and were called by His Name, God the Father must have been truly overjoyed with delight. Right from the beginning of time, in eternity past, God has admired His most precious creation. But this love and admiration is not a corporate thing, for He loves each one of us individually - He has called you by name - and He knows every single hair on your head! To God, you are not just another member of His universal church, but a beloved son or daughter.

During a Sunday school class a little boy said that one of the times we *dance* is when we are happy - '*so God must also dance when He is happy*'. Well, we know God was happy at end of creation because God saw everything was good. And therefore, (like the little boy imagined) God may have danced. That specialness and uniqueness given to us at creation is repeated again and again. To God we are His most precious creation, and He rejoices in what He has made!

But we have a duty because of the extreme value placed by God on us (and on all persons). Our perspective, how we view things, should change. First we must view ourselves as a child of God and thereafter treat ourselves as valuable individuals. On the day that I was born maybe God did dance - WOW! And this could be true not only for me but for each of you too! Imagine, on the day you were born God danced! St. Augustine once said, "*God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.*"

If God was genuinely happy after each phase in creation, then surely He would be *happy* every time He creates a future son or daughter! That's how precious people are. You need to treat others as valuable and precious, and what you say about yourself, you can also say about others. They are valuable in God's eyes and should be valuable in yours as well. Also, we need to all find a way to recognize the true worth God has placed on others. Our treatment of ourselves, and those around us, needs to reflect the love and compassion God has for all of mankind.

If your sense of belonging has never been satisfied, it is either because you do not know God, or if you do, you do not know how much He loves, honours and values you. In fact, God admires you all day! To "admire" is '*to regard with delight and affection*'. Isn't this incredible? The Creator of the universe regards you (and me) with much delight and great affection!

Now, our opening scripture has even greater significance....

*"Don't ever be afraid. I will set you free. I will send for you by name. For you belong to Me. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, their waters will not sweep over you. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not harm you. I am the Lord your God. I am the Holy One of Israel. I am the One who saves you. I will give up Egypt to set you free. I will give up Cush and Seba for you. You are priceless to me. So I will trade other people for you. I will give up other nations to save your lives. You are greatly honoured, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:1-4).*