

CHAPTER 45

Cyrus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God's shepherd; more is said to him and more of him in this chapter, not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here,

- I.** The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to release God's people (v. 1-4).
- II.** The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable, sovereignty (v. 5-7).
- III.** A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance (v. 8).
- IV.** A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarrelled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity (v. 9, 10).
- V.** Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus (v. 11-15).
- VI.** A challenge given to the worshippers of idols and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification (v. 16-25). And here, as in many other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ and of gospel grace.

~~281~~ **ISAIAH 45:1-4**

PROPHECIES CONCERNING CYRUS

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media. The pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his origin. Some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by a herdsman's wife. However, it is agreed that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable, especially when

Croesus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Croesus with such vigour that in a little time he took Sardis and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great (for Croesus was rich to a proverb) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was nearly ten years afterwards that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius and with the forces of Persia, he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have the history of Daniel 5. Babylon had now grown exorbitantly rich and strong. It was forty-five miles in compass (some say more): the walls were thirty-two feet thick and 100 cubits high. Some say, They were so thick that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; others say, They were fifty cubits thick and 200 high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it. Now here, 210 years before it came to pass, we are told,

I. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people. In order to this he shall be a mighty conqueror and a wealthy monarch and nations shall become tributaries to him and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world God has seldom seen fit to entrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend them; but if here has been occasion, for the god of the church, to make use of them, God has been pleased rather to put them into the hands of others, to be employed for them, than to venture them in their own hands. Cyrus is here called God's *anointed*, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, ²¹³⁶2 Kings 13:16. Being under such direction,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with; and therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests.

(1.) Populous kingdoms shall yield to him. God will *subdue nations before him*; when he is in the full career of his successes he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once: yet it is not he that subdues them; it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory.

(2.) Potent kings shall fall before him: *I will loose the loins of kings*, either the girdle of their loins (divesting them of their power and dignity) or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for, when he was terrified by the handwriting on the wall, *the joints of his loins were loosed*, ²⁰⁶Daniel 5:6.

(3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city to *open before him the two-leaved gates*, not treacherously nor timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open to admit him as a friend.

(4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him: *I will go before thee*, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and then the *crooked places*, shall be made *straight*; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find a ready road that have God going before them.

(5.) No opposition shall stand before him. He that gives him his commission *will break in pieces the gates of brass* that are shut against him, *and cut asunder the bars of iron* wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had 100 gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers very much (v. 3): *I will give thee the treasures of darkness*, treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key and had not seen the light of many years, or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. *The hidden riches of secret places*, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it beforehand; and Cyrus very honestly owned

God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives. ~~4100~~ Ezra 1:2, *God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and thereby has obliged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.*

II. We are here told what God designed in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars we may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars we are here told.

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified: "*That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name long before thou wast born.*" When Cyrus should have this prophecy of Isaiah shown to him, and should there find his own name and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he should thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel was the Lord, Jehovah, the only living and true God, and that he continued to own his Israel though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, v. 4. Cyrus knew not God as the God of Israel. Having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God. But, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd. He called him by his name, *Cyrus*, nay, which was yet great honour, he surnamed him and called him his *anointed*. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his *Cyropaedia*; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The reason why God preferred him was *for Jacob his servant's sake*. Note,

(1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church.

(2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power to use them for his glory, by showing kindness to his people. Cyrus is preferred that Israel may be released. He shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for their kingdom is not of this world,

it is yet to come. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and entrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. *When he ascended on high he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captives, and opened the prison to those that were bound.*

ISAIAH 45:5-10

THE DIVINE DOMINION

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world in all the great things he did for Cyrus and by him. Observe,

I. How this doctrine is here laid down concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things: —

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God besides him. This is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding, air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here proclaim it to the world: *I am the Lord, I the Lord, Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God besides me*, no other self-existent, self-sufficient, being, none infinite and eternal. And again (v. 6), *There is none besides me*; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits; they are all vanity and a lie, for *I am the Lord, and there is none else*. This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was the worshipping of idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was the setting up of themselves for gods and being idolized, to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he becomes thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him (v. 7): *I form the light*, which is grateful and pleasing, and *I create darkness*, which is grievous and unpleasing. *I make peace* (put here for all good) and *I create evil*, not the evil of sin (God is not the author of that), but the evil of punishment. *I the Lord order, and direct, and do all these things*. Observe,

(1.) The very different events that befall the children of men. Light and darkness are opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, they are sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, *neither day nor night*, ³⁴⁶Zechariah 14:6. There is a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other. Sometimes they are counterchanged, as noonday light and midnight darkness. In the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other, witness Job's case.

(2.) The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all: *I the Lord*, the fountain of all being, am the fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light (⁰⁰³Genesis 1:3) still forms the providential light. He who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature makes peace in the affairs of men. He who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness; for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts, and all our crosses, in this world.

II. How this doctrine is here proved and published.

1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus: "*There is no God besides me*, for (v. 5) *I girded thee, though thou hast not known me*. It was not thy own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know, nor seek to." By *this* it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases even of those that are strangers to him and pay their homage to other gods.

2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sunrise and sun-set, that the Lord is God and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that *there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for their help*.

III. How this doctrine is here improved and applied.

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel (v. 8): *Drop down, you heavens, from above*.

Some take this as the saints' prayer for the deliverance. I rather take it as God's precept concerning it; for he is said to *command deliverances*, ^{<944>}Psalm 44:4. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run — *To all officers, civil and military*. All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven and the grass of the earth, which *tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men*, ^{<387>}Micah 5:7. Observe,

(1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel. *Righteousness* must first be wrought in them; they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, for they spring up together and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not us therefore put asunder. See ^{<389>}Psalm 85:9-11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made redemption to us by being made to us righteousness and sanctification.

(2.) The means of this great deliverance. Rather than it shall fail, when the set time for it shall come, the *heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation*, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration, of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above; nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit it is now *poured* down, and, if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends that despaired of it (v. 9): *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!* God is the Maker of all things, and therefore our Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him and never contend with him.

(1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer when the time shall come for their release. Woe to the insulting Babylonians that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go!

(2.) Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way out before God's time shall come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woeful condition that strive with their Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but *let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth*. Men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions. They are dashed in pieces one against another; and, if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as,

[1.] For the clay to find fault with the potter: *Shall the clay say to him that forms it, "What makest thou? Why dost thou make me of this shape and not that?"* Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such a heat and passion with the potter as to tell him that *he has no hands*, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. "Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter and therefore to advise him, or mightier than the potter and therefore to control him?" He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made? Shall we say, *He has no hands*, whose hands made us and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, ~~and~~ Romans 9:20, 21.

[2.] It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents, to say to the father, *What begettest thou?* or to the mother, *"What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature and the calamities of human life?"* Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honour we owe to him by submitting to his will?

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

I. They are invited to enquire concerning the issue of their troubles, v. 11. *The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker*, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them,

1. To consult his word: “*Ask of me things to come*; have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long?” Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them.

2. To seek unto him by prayer: “*Concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands*, which as becomes them submit to the will of their Father, the will of their potter, *command you me*, not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests, and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by and grounded upon the promise.” We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer. *My sons, and the work of my hands, commend to me* (so some read it), bring them to me and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalency with God: *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what would you that I should do unto you?* Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof (v. 9, 10): *Do you question me concerning things to come?* and am I bound to give you an account? *And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me*, or prescribe to me? Dare you do so? *Shall any teach God knowledge*, or give law to him? Those that complain of God do in effect assume an authority over him.

II. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God when they are brought very low and are utterly incapable of helping themselves, v. 12. Their *help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*, which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort.

The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he please, to the deliverance of the church (v. 8), for he created both, and therefore has both at command.

1. He *made the earth, and created man upon it*, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, ⁴³⁵⁶Psalm 115:16. He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom and power sufficient to govern man here on this earth and to make what use he pleases of him.

2. *His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded* into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel that their God is the creator and governor of the world.

III. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus and their deliverance by him were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, v. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall proclaim it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands: *I have raised him up in righteousness*, that is, in pursuance and performance of my promises and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon: *I will direct all his ways*; and then it follows that he will prosper him, for those must needs speed well that are under a divine direction. God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God: —

(1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, that is, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it.

(2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously, not demanding any ransom, nor compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that for poor captive souls which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the *opening of the prison to those that were bound* (²³¹¹Isaiah 61:1), enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should *come over to*

them and be theirs, v. 14. Cyrus, having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries (^{<5104>}Ezra 1:4), so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them: *Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee.* This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews (^{<1087>}Esther 8:17), *and said, We will go with you, humbly begging leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you,* ^{<3823>}Zechariah 8:23. The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given them, owned that God was among them and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, — when the Gentiles shall become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ (^{<4558>}Romans 15:18), as willing captives to the church (^{<4813>}Psalm 110:3), glad to wear her chains, — when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that *God is with them of a truth* (^{<4424>}1 Corinthians 14:24, 25) and shall assay to join himself to them, — and when those that had been *of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet*, and be made to know that *God has loved her* (^{<6819>}Revelation 3:9), and the *kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem*, ^{<6724>}Revelation 21:24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

IV. They are taught to trust God further than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into their mouths, and goes before them in saying it (v. 15): *Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself.*

1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble, *hid himself and was wroth*, ^{<2517>}Isaiah 57:17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns: but let them *wait upon the Lord that hides his face*, ^{<2187>}Isaiah 8:17.

2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour commonly *his way is in the sea*, ^{<3779>}Psalm 77:19. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits (^{<3046>}Zechariah 4:6), by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is *the God of Israel*, the *Saviour*. See ^{<854>}Job 35:14.

V. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods (v. 16): *Those who are makers of idols*, not only who frame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, *shall be ashamed and confounded*, when they shall be convinced of their mistakes and shall be forced to acknowledged that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. They shall go to confusion when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin nor escape the punishment of it, ^{<1907>}Psalm 97:7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but *all of them*; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet *they shall go to confusion together*. Bind them in bundles, to burn them.

VI. They are assured that those who trust in God shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, v. 17. Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon he directed them by his prophet,

1. To look up to him as the author of their salvation: *Israel shall be saved in the Lord*. Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them. They shall be saved in him; for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe.

2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance to that which is spiritual and has reference to another world, to think of that salvation by the Messiah which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery and a restoration to everlasting bliss. "Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure that *you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world with out end*. You shall not only be delivered from the *everlasting shame and contempt* which will be the

portion of idolaters (^{<2711>}Daniel 12:2), but you shall have everlasting honour and glory.”

[1.] There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world.

[2.] Those who are saved with the everlasting salvation shall never be ashamed of what they did or suffered in the hopes of it; for it will so far outdo their expectations as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did *belong confusion of face* (^{<2707>}Daniel 9:7, 8); yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. Those who are confounded as penitents for their own sin shall not be confounded as believers in God's promise and power.

VII. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them: *I am the Lord, and there is none else*. That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone appears by the two great lights, that of nature and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage (v. 18): “*Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens and formed the earth, I am the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else.*” The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay, they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of and are most conversant with. It is here observed,

(1.) That he formed it. It is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by Infinite Wisdom.

(2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it he established it, *founded it on the seas*, (^{<1241>}Psalms 24:2), *hung it on nothing* (^{<1246>}Job 26:7) as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial an hung it fast, *ponderibus librata suis — poised by its own weight*.

(3.) That he fitted it for use, and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. *He created it not in vain*, merely to be a proof of his power; but *he formed it to be inhabited* by the children of men, and for

that end he drew the waters off from it, with which it was at first covered, and made the *dry land appear*, ^{<B416>}Psalm 104:6, 7. Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain, but intended every thing for some end and fitted it to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault. It should also be observed, to the honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckoned that not made in vain which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation. As the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the Pagan deities, as well as his operations, v. 19. The preference is here placed in three things: — All that God has said is plain, satisfactory, and just.

(1.) In the manner of the delivery of it it is plain and open: *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth*. The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; those that had familiar spirits whispered and muttered (^{<2189>}Isaiah 8:19); but God delivered his law from the top of Mount Sinai before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds. Wisdom *cries in the chief places of concourse*, ^{<3113>}Proverbs 1:20, 21; 8:1-3. The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who runs may read it; if he be obscure to any, they may thank themselves. Christ pleaded in his own defence what God says here, *In secret have I said nothing*, ^{<6831>}John 18:20.

(2.) In the use and benefit of it it was highly satisfactory: *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek you me in vain*, as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought *for the living to the dead*, ^{<2189>}Isaiah 8:19. This includes all the gracious answers that God gave both to those who consulted him (his word is to them a faithful guide) and to those that prayed to him. The seed of Jacob are a praying people; it is the *generation of those that seek him*, ^{<1246>}Psalm 24:6. And, as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not to them, to any of them, *Seek you me in vain*; for, if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them such a sufficiency of grace and such comfort and

satisfaction of soul as were equivalent. What we say of winter is true of prayer, It never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to those that diligently seek him, but will be their bountiful rewarder.

(3.) In the matter of it it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it: *I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right*, and consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers which were the reproach of human nature and tended to the extirpation of virtue; but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

ISAIAH 45:20-25

SALVATION IN CHRIST

What here is said is intended, as before,

I. For the conviction of idolators, to show them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all *that have escaped of the nations*, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come, and hear what is to be said against the worshipping of idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews, that Babylon, which had of old been the womb of idolatry, might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves and come together; God has something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish sottish thing, upon two accounts: —

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves: *They set up the wood of their graven image*; for that is the *substratum*. Though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. They *pray to a god that cannot save*; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing. How do those disparage themselves who give honour to that as a god which cannot, as a god, give good to them! How do those deceive themselves who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly those have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God (v. 21): “Summon them all; tell them that the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal. *Bring them near, and let them take counsel together* what to say in defence of themselves and their idols. It shall, as before, be put upon this issue: let them show when any of their gods did with any certainty foretel future events, as the God of Israel has done, and it shall be acknowledged that they have some colour for their pretensions. But None of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but *I the Lord have told it from that time*, long before it came to pass; therefore you must own *there is no other God besides me.*”

(1.) None besides is fit to rule. He is *a just God*, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed.

(2.) None besides is able to help. As he is a just God, so he is *the Saviour*, who can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

II. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, v. 22. Those that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion, “Let them but *look to me* by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and look up to me, and they shall *be saved.*” It seems to refer further to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth, the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up. *To it shall the Gentiles seek.* When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him. They shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent; and so strong is the eye of faith that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth; for *he is God, and there is none else.* Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour: —

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that, how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, v. 23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation: *I have sworn by myself*

(and God can swear by no greater, ^{<503>}Hebrews 6:13); *the word has gone out of my mouth*, and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it has gone forth *in righteousness*, for it is the most reasonable equitable thing in the world that he who made all should be Lord of all, that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He has said it, and it shall be made good, *I will be exalted*, ^{<960>}Psalms 46:10. He has assured us,

(1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom. They shall do him homage — *Unto me every knee shall bow*; and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him — *Unto me every tongue shall swear*. This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus, ^{<540>}Romans 14:10, 11. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ* and give account to him, for it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God*; and it seems to be referred to, ^{<1010>}Psalms 2:9, 10. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adorations and addresses, and in cheerful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind never startles at assurances.

(2.) That he will be universally sought unto, and application shall be made to him from all parts of the world: *Unto him shall men of distant countries come*, to implore his favour. *Unto thee shall all flesh come with their request*, ^{<510>}Psalms 65:2. And, when Christ was *lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him*.

(3.) That it will be to no purpose to make opposition to him. *All that are incensed against him*, that rage at his bonds and cords — the nations that are angry because he has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom — *they shall be ashamed*; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us that, whatever becomes of us and our interests, *the Lord will reign for ever!*

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for shall be effectually secured: *Surely shall one say*, and another shall learn by his example to

say the same, so that all the seed of Israel, according to the Spirit, shall say, and stand to it,

(1.) That God has a sufficiency for them and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs: *In the Lord is all righteousness and strength* (so the margin reads it); he is himself righteous and strong. He can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable. He has also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay, we may say, not only “*He has it,*” but, “*In him we have it,*” because he has said that he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness (that is, grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance) and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good-will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us. He is the fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, must *go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness,* ¹⁷¹⁶ Psalm 71:16.

(2.) That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this.

[1.] The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned by their God; but, when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it.

[2.] All true Christians, that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified and shall glory in that. Observe, *First,* All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright praying seed. *Secondly,* The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ is that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And therefore, *Thirdly,* The great duty believers owe to Christ is to glory in him, and to make their boast of him. *Therefore* he is made all in all to us, that *whose glories may glory in the Lord;* and let us comply with this intention.