

Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55)
(#12) God's Calling and Commission of Cyrus (44:24-45:13)

(The outline of Isaiah 40-55 is placed at the end of these notes.)

In the section before us, **Isaiah 44:24-45:13**, God had promised a remnant of His people Israel, that He would deliver them from their exile and their bondage from Babylon, to which God had delivered them in His judgment. We had begun to consider this section toward the end of last week's message. God declared that He would raise up a king Persia who would secure the release of His people. God even identified the name of this king, King Cyrus, 140 years before Persia defeated and supplanted the nation of Babylon. God gave this advance information to His people in order to stir faith in them and to engender hope in them. Beginning in 44:24f the Lord described Himself in terms that depict His power. He reminds them of the great power He showed when He first redeemed them at their birth as a nation when they were brought forth from Egypt. Not only does He have power, but He is sovereign in the manifestation of His power. In other words, God always accomplished what He purposes to do in history. No one can thwart or frustrate Him in the manifestation of His divine rule.

In this entire passage, which includes 44:24 through 45:13, God reveals Himself in His sovereign power and rule in order to encourage faith in Him on the part of His people that He will most certainly bring to pass what He has promised. We will see today that belief in God's sovereignty is a source of great joy and comfort for His people, even while they are awaiting the manifestation of His power to deliver them from whatever is binding them or tormenting them. All the forces that oppose them will fail. God will succeed in bringing them deliverance so that they may know Him and worship Him as His people. And so we read in **Isaiah 44:24-25**:

*²⁴Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
And He who formed you from the womb:
"I am the LORD, who makes all things,
Who stretches out the heavens all alone,
Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;
²⁵Who frustrates the signs of the babblers,
And drives diviners mad;
Who turns wise men backward,
And makes their knowledge foolishness;*

The Lord, in order to assure His people more fully, states His intention to deliver His people and enable their return to their homeland. **Verse 26** describes God affirming His commitment to deliver His people.

*²⁶Who confirms the word of His servant,
And performs the counsel of His messengers;
Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,'
To the cities of Judah,
'You shall be built,'
And I will raise up her waste places;*

The prophet described God as having been faithful to His servants, the prophets. Everything that He ever told His servants to speak forth of what He had determined to do, He did. He was faithful to His spokesmen. Here, the word says that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, even though it had been destroyed by the Babylonians and laid in ruins even as this word was given. And it came to pass that Jerusalem was rebuilt, after a Jewish remnant returned after their release from exile.

God's deliverance would be like the one He had performed in the past, when He had first delivered them from Egypt.

*²⁷Who says to the deep, 'Be dry!
And I will dry up your rivers';*

As God would not allow the Red Sea to keep His people in bondage in Egypt, when He had originally promised to bring them out, so the same God has the same power to bring to pass what He declared He would do.

We then read an amazing prophecy in **verse 28**.

*²⁸Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built,"
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."'*

Here God identified by name the instrument by which He would bring to pass the release of His people. Here the emperor of Persia is identified by name perhaps 140 years before the event. Cyrus would be the Persian king whom God would use to destroy the Babylonians and deliver His people from their bondage. The end, of course, is that the people would be free to worship Him in His temple.

We now arrive to Isaiah 45. The first thirteen verses are a continuation of the message that began in 44:24, which is God's calling and commission of Cyrus. Let us read the first portion of this passage before us, **Isaiah 45:1-7**.

“Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:
²I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.
³I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the LORD,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel.
⁴For Jacob My servant's sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.
⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other;
There is no God besides Me.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me,
⁶That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That there is none besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other;
⁷I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these things.⁷

In the last verse of Isaiah 44 we read of the God who commissioned Cyrus. **Verse 28** speaks of God's intention to use the Persian king Cyrus to accomplish deliverance for His people.

*²⁸Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built,"
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."'*

But now in 45:1-7 we read of...

B. God Charging Cyrus to Deliver Israel (45:1-7)

*"Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:*

God is quoted as commissioning and assisting Cyrus to accomplish what God had intended for him to perform on God's behalf. Here we read of the sovereignty of God over even the unsaved of the world in order to accomplish His purposes. God is not only in sovereign control of His people who willingly submit to His rule, but God rules over all in order to accomplish His purposes in history. God has granted Jesus Christ authority over all the human race in order that He might be able to give eternal life to the elect, the ones that the Father had given unto Him (Cf. John 17:1ff).

Now the biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God commonly stirs up a great deal of controversy. It is a doctrine that exalts God, but in doing so, it humbles man. And proud men do not like to be humbled. Man in his sinfulness insists that he is in control of his own life and his own destiny, that he may be congratulated for his successes even as he is blamed for his failures. And so, God's sovereignty is a difficult subject that stirs up the fallen heart faster than about any other. Why people resist the truth that God is sovereign is a testimony to their own sinful desire to want to be their own gods, determining for themselves their own destiny. But the sovereignty of God is foundational to a biblical doctrine of the one true God. **Arthur Pink** set forth this matter in his classic book, *The Sovereignty of God*. He opened with a reasoned argument for God's sovereignty from God's Word that seems to me to be unchallengeable by Scripture or reason. We have read from this work in the past, but wish to do so again. Some matters bear repetition. Here are Pink's words:

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? That God reigns supreme in Heaven is generally conceded; that He does so over this world, is almost universally denied-if not directly, then indirectly. More and more are men in their philosophizing and theorizing relegating God to the background. Take the material realm. Not only is it denied that God *created* everything by personal and direct action, but few believe that He has any immediate concern in *regulating* the works of His own hands. Everything is supposed to be ordered according to the (impersonal and abstract) "laws

of Nature.” Thus is the Creator banished from His own creation. Therefore we need not be surprised that men, in their degrading conceptions, exclude Him from the realm of human affairs. Throughout Christendom, with an almost negligible exception, the theory is held that man is “a free agent,” and therefore, lord of his fortunes and the determiner of his destiny. That Satan is to be blamed for much of the evil which is in the world is freely affirmed by those who, though having so much to say about “the responsibility of man,” often *deny* their *own* responsibility, by attributing to the Devil what, in fact, proceeds from their *own* evil hearts (Mark 7:21-23).

But who *is* regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? Attempt to take a serious and comprehensive view of the world. What a scene of confusion and chaos confronts us on every side! Sin is rampant; lawlessness abounds; evil men and seducers *are* waxing “worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13). Today, everything appears to be *out of joint*. Thrones are creaking and tottering, ancient dynasties are being overturned, democracies are revolting, civilization is a demonstrated failure; half of Christendom was but recently locked-together in a death grapple; and now that the titanic conflict is over, instead of the world having been made “safe for democracy,” we have discovered that democracy is very *unsafe* for the world. Unrest, discontent, and lawlessness are rife everywhere, and none can say how soon another great war will be set in motion. Statesmen are perplexed and staggered. Men’s hearts are “failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). Do *these* things look as though *God* had full control?

But let us confine our attention to the religious realm. After nineteen centuries of Gospel preaching, Christ is still “despised and rejected of men.” Worse still, *He* (the Christ of Scripture) is proclaimed and magnified by very few. In the majority of modern pulpits He is dishonored and disowned. Despite frantic efforts to attract the crowds, the majority of the churches are being emptied rather than filled. And what of the great masses of non-church goers? In the light of Scripture we are compelled to believe that the “many” are on the Broad Road that leadeth to destruction, and that only “few” are on the Narrow Way that leadeth unto life. Many are declaring that Christianity is a failure, and despair is settling on many faces. Not a few of the Lord’s own people are bewildered, and their faith is being severely tried. *And what of God?* Does He see and hear? Is He impotent or indifferent? A number of those who are regarded as leaders of Christian-thought told us that God could not help the coming of the late awful War, and that He was *unable* to bring about its termination. It was said, and said openly, that conditions were *beyond* God’s control. Do these things look as though *God* were ruling the world?

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What impression is made upon the minds of those men of the world who, occasionally, attend a Gospel service? What are the conceptions formed by those who hear even those preachers who are counted as “orthodox?” Is it not that a *disappointed* God is the One whom Christians believe in? From what is heard from the average evangelist today, is not any serious hearer *obliged* to conclude that he professes to represent a God who is filled with benevolent intentions, yet unable to carry them out; that He is earnestly desirous of blessing men, but that they will not let Him? Then, *must* not the average hearer draw the inference that the Devil has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than blamed?

But does not everything seem to show that the Devil *has* far more to do with the affairs of earth than God has? Ah, it all depends upon whether we are walking by faith, or walking by sight. Are your thoughts, my reader, concerning this world and God’s relation to it, based upon what you *see*? Face this question seriously and honestly. And if you are a Christian you will, most probably, have cause to bow your head with shame and sorrow, and to acknowledge that it *is* so. Alas, in reality, we walk very little “by faith.” But what does “walking by faith” signify? It means that our thoughts are formed, our actions regulated, our lives molded by the Holy Scriptures, for, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing *by the Word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). It is from the Word of Truth, and that alone, that we can learn what is *God’s* relation to this world.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God or the Devil? *What saith the Scriptures?* Ere we consider the direct reply to this query, let it be said that the Scriptures *predicted* just what we now see and hear. The prophecy of Jude is in course of fulfilment. It would lead us too far astray from our present inquiry to fully amplify this assertion, but what we have particularly in mind is a sentence in

verse 8—“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, *despise dominion and speak evil of dignities.*” Yes, they “speak evil” of the Supreme Dignity, the “Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Ours is peculiarly an age of irreverence, and as the consequence, the spirit of lawlessness, which brooks no restraint and which is desirous of casting off everything which interferes with the free course of self-will, is rapidly engulfing the earth like some giant tidal wave. The members of the rising generation are the most flagrant offenders, and in the decay and disappearing of parental authority we have the certain precursor of the abolition of civic authority. Therefore, in view of the growing disrespect for human law and the refusal to “render honor to whom honor is due,” we need not be surprised that the recognition of the majesty, the authority, the Sovereignty of the Almighty law-giver should recede more and more into the background, and the masses have less and less patience with those who insist upon them. And conditions will not improve; instead, the more sure Word of Prophecy makes known to us that they will grow worse and worse. Nor do we expect to be able to stem the tide—it has already risen much too high for that. All we can now hope to do is warn our fellow-saints against the spirit of the age, and thus seek to counteract its baneful influence upon them.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today—God, or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the sceptre is in His hands; that He is directing *all things* “after the counsel of His own will.” They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works of His hands. They affirm that God is the “Almighty,” that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute Sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it *must* be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the “Most High,” the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God in fact as well as in name.¹

We will stop there. He made his case. This understanding of God is essential to knowing what the true God is like and understanding His involvement in His world. This understanding of the true sovereignty of God over history, over all of His creation, is set forth in the passage before us.

Here in **Isaiah 45:1** we read that God had called King Cyrus by name 140 years before he gained control of Persia and conquered Babylon. Cyrus, although a pagan king, was used of God to effect the deliverance of God’s people, Israel, from the control of the Babylonians. God redeemed them from bondage. God restored the people of God to liberty, and was, therefore, God’s “anointed”, or God’s “Messiah.” We read in the Scriptures that God would have many things employed in His service to be anointed by a priest of Israel. God also anointed priests and kings, setting them apart as His instruments and spokesmen. King Cyrus was an instrument in the hands of God; God had raised him up. God had superintended his life and caused his rise to power, securing every political and military victory that he had ever encountered.

Let us read again **verse 1**.

***“Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:***

God would escort Cyrus through these successes. God had taken Cyrus “by the right hand” to subdue nations, by making his victories easy. God was going in front of, ahead of, Cyrus, smoothing out the rough places, breaking open doors and gates of cities so as to permit the entrance of Cyrus’ armies. It is God who looses the “armor of kings”; a reference to the stripping off the armor off the waist of a king, the symbol of

¹ Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Baker, 1930, reprint 1975), pp. 13-17.

his authority. In other words, God is able to make an existing king vulnerable to defeat and overthrow. But God preserves and enables King Cyrus to succeed in all of his efforts to depose kings and subdue kingdoms.

Cyrus is presented as a type of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Cyrus was “anointed” as was our Savior, Jesus Christ. God assisted in Cyrus in accomplishing his rule, as God the Father also assisted His Son in accomplishing His work of redeeming His people. God would establish Cyrus as ruler of a kingdom as He would of Jesus Christ, setting Him over an everlasting kingdom. Cyrus would bring deliverance to God’s people from Babylon which would enable their return to the Promised Land and rebuild Jerusalem. And so Jesus Christ delivers His people from this fallen world, “Babylon”, enabling them to return unto Him unto a heavenly Zion.

We then may read **verse 2** in which God promised to enable Cyrus to expand his kingdom. God speaks:

*²I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.*

We had read last week of the Jewish historian, Josephus, recording Cyrus’ own words that he had come to recognize that the God of Israel was the cause of his success and the expansion of his kingdom.

We then read further in **verse 3** of God’s promise to bless Cyrus’ military exploits to such a degree that Cyrus would recognize God’s hand in his life.

*³I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the LORD,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel.*

So that Cyrus could finance his warfare, God gave to him ample funds. History records that Cyrus first defeated Croesus, king of Lydia, who was the richest of all men in that day. **Matthew Henry** recounted the history of Cyrus before conquering Babylon.

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 Crœsus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Crœsus 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 Crœsus 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 5.²

God gave Cyrus his power and riches in such a manner that he saw it was due to the true God that he was able to achieve what he had. Cyrus stated this in a letter that he wrote, which Ezra refers to in the opening chapter of his book. Here is **Ezra 1:1-4**:

² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 4 (Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), p. 250.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ²Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. ³Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

By the way, if a pagan king would acknowledge that it was by God that success and power had come to him, should not we acknowledge that any and all successes, promotions, or attainments, be attributed to Him who opened the way for us? Some would prefer to ascribe that which He should be credited to their talent, wisdom, their luck, their psychic or stars, or whatever, to anything and everything other than God who gives life and strength to all.

God then declared why He purposed to raise up and use king Cyrus. We read in **verse 4**:

*⁴For Jacob My servant's sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

It was not due to some merit on the part of Cyrus. God had raised him up for the purpose to effect the deliverance of God's people from Babylon.

Why did God express this to Cyrus and have it recorded long before the rise of Cyrus? The answer is that God sought two things:

(1) He would encourage His people who might hear this prophecy that their great God would go to any all efforts to bring about their deliverance;

(2) God would show Cyrus these matters so that Cyrus might be disposed to treat Israel with kindness, for they were the cause of his greatness.

Matthew Henry put it this way:

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***, verse 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 *Cyropædia*; 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.*³

Now here in verse 4 God calls “Jacob” His “servant.” In the second clause of this verse God calls “Israel” His “elect.” God brings people into relationship with Himself when He calls them to do so. We have already seen this in Isaiah’s prophecy. But we also that the purpose of God choosing Israel was so that Israel might “serve” Him. And God has chosen you, if you are a Christian, but also with this purpose, that is to serve Him. This is why God had raised up Cyrus, so that Israel might be released from bondage so that they might serve God. But of course God raised up a greater Redeemer in Jesus, that we might be released from the bondage of sin, but for a purpose, that we might serve Him.

Another lesson might be drawn from these verses. Just as God was working behind the scenes in setting up Cyrus, giving him victory in battles, to grow stronger and stronger until he could successfully make a challenge to Babylon’s rule, so we should be confident that our sovereign God is even now working behind the scenes in order to deliver us from all of our difficulties and those who would oppress us.

When various changes happen in the world, God secures at the same time the salvation of His people, and in the midst of storms He wonderfully preserves His church. We are indeed blind and stupid as to the works of God, yet we ought firmly to believe that, even when everything appears to be driven about at random, and to be tossed up and down, God never forgets His church, whose salvation, on the contrary, He promotes by hidden method, so that it is at length seen that He is her guardian and defender.⁴

In **verse 5** we read of God’s own assertion of His sovereign control over King Cyrus.

***⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other;
There is no God besides Me.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me,***

God girds the belt on Cyrus, the symbol of his kingly authority. And it is not because Cyrus knew God. In fact, it states that Cyrus did not know God in a relational sense. Cyrus was a pagan and remained a pagan, but God used this pagan king to accomplish His purposes of grace toward His people.

In **verse 6** we read a further reason that God informed Cyrus ahead of time. It was so that in advance of the victories of Cyrus, all would know that it was the God of Israel who was sovereign in His dealings among men.

***⁶That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That there is none besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other;***

³ Ibid, p. 251.

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 3, p. 247.

God then asserts once again that He controls all things that transpires; He makes peace but also creates calamity. **Verse 7** reads:

*⁷I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these things.'*

God controls all events, “good” and “bad.” It is not to be said, of course, that God is the author of evil. But God raises up evil men so as to chastise His people and punish the wicked. He is the Sovereign Ruler of history.

C. God will commence His work of Delivering His People (45:8-13)

In this section of Isaiah’s prophecy God declares that He will commence His work of delivering His people as the sovereign God over all things. **Verse 8** is worded as a decree of God issuing His commands to the creation to participate in accomplishing His work of deliverance of His people.

*⁸“Rain down, you heavens, from above,
And let the skies pour down righteousness;
Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation,
And let righteousness spring up together.
I, the LORD, have created it.*

This is a pronouncement of God to bring about what had been previously declared. As rain comes down from heaven resulting in fruit springing up from the earth, the heavens are called upon to pour down “righteousness.” Here “righteousness” would be the manifestation of God’s faithfulness to His Word, to Himself, that He fulfill what He committed Himself to do and to accomplish what He purposed to do, that being to deliver His people. God is righteous to bring to pass His words of promise.

Now some might be critical of God using one like Cyrus, a pagan king, to effect deliverance for His people. We read of God’s response to them in **verses 9** and **10**. God hears the charge against Him and His ways and so He answers them, essentially saying, “Who are you to tell Me what I can do?”

*⁹“Woe to him who strives with his Maker!
Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth!
Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’
Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands?’
¹⁰Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What are you begetting?’
Or to the woman, ‘What have you brought forth?’”*

God challenged His challengers. In essence says: “I am the LORD, come and ask Me what I intend to do.” He is in control, if you want to know what is going to transpire, come to Him and ask Him.

Three illustrations are provided to show the absurdity of God’s creatures to protest His purposes that He intends to bring to pass. **First**, God likens Himself to a **potter**. To protest against God for the manner in which He accomplished His purposes is absurd as broken pieces of pottery complaining to their potter that He is not free to do what He wants to do with the things that He has made. “Does the pot challenge the potter as to the manner or shape to which it is being fashioned? Can you say that the potter has no hands?” No, obviously God must be shaping, manipulating His creatures. **Second**, we read of God likened to a **father** who begets a child. And then similarly, **third**, He is compared to a **mother** who has given birth to her child. Does a child have any control over its begetting, its birth? So God controls His creatures. He has full power over His creatures.

The metaphor of the potter and the clay was used by Paul in Romans 9. There Paul argued that God was sovereign in His election of sinners to be saved. Those that He chose to save from their sins, God had chosen before the foundation of the world. Paul addressed what he thought might be the reaction of some who opposed his doctrine. “If God is sovereign in giving salvation only to the ones that He chose and damns all the rest, how could God justly hold people accountable in judgment? Paul used the potter and clay metaphor to argue the defence of his doctrine. Here is **Romans 9:18-24**:

Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? ²²What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Paul argued that God was free and right in disposing of His creatures as He determined. Because God created them for His purposes, He was free to do as He determined to do.

We should be careful never to strive against God, complaining of the lot in life that He has apportioned to us. He is free to put up or pull down. He is free to bless, as men count blessing, or He may deal seemingly in a severe manner. Do not charge God with mismanagement of your life by complaining, regretting, or mourning over His dealings.

God challenged those who would challenge Him, arguing that He I the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all that He made. We read in **verse 11**,

*¹¹Thus says the LORD,
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:
“Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons;
And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me.*

Perhaps it should better be translated as a question, as does the ESV translation.

Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him:
“Ask me of things to come;
will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?

God was challenging them who would challenge His right to do as He has determined to do.

God then again affirms His right as Creator.

*¹²I have made the earth,
And created man on it.
I—My hands—stretched out the heavens,
And all their host I have commanded.*

God then again affirms that He had purposed to call and equip King Cyrus of Persia to bring about the deliverance of His people from their Babylonian bondage.

*¹³I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways;
He shall build My city*

***And let My exiles go free,
Not for price nor reward,”
Says the LORD of hosts.***

God will have raised up Cyrus to his position of authority, doing so due to His faithfulness to His promises to His people. And so, the “righteousness” that is identified is not that Cyrus was righteous, but God was righteous in raising him up to deliver His people.

God would oversee the life and rule of Cyrus. God declared, “***And I will direct all his ways.***” God would have King Cyrus rebuild Jerusalem, that had been destroyed decades before. God describes Jerusalem here as “My city.” He would also release the Jewish people from their captivity in Babylon. Their release would cost nothing either. God would see to it that Cyrus releases His people without ransom or bribery. Cyrus is God’s servant to do God’s bidding, to rebuild Jerusalem, release the Jewish exiles to return to their land. And he would do it for free.

But God has greater purposes than just to save a remnant of His people from Babylon. Through them to whom He would send the Messiah, God’s purpose would extend to salvation to the gentile world, which is foretold in the remainder of Isaiah 45. We will consider this prophecy next Lord’s Day, Lord willing.

Outline of Isaiah 40-66
SECTION THREE: ORACLES OF REDEMPTION AND CONSUMMATION

- I. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (Chs. 40-55)
 - A. 40:1-11 The Prophet is to Announce God’s Coming
 - B. 40:12-31 The Creator of the Universe
 - C. 41:1-29 God Promises to Deliver His People from Babylon
 - D. 42:1-9 The First Servant Song
 - E. 42:10-13 Sing to the Lord a New Song
 - F. 42:14-17 God declares His resolve to battle on behalf of His people
 - G. 42:18-25 Israel, the Blind and Deaf Servant of God
 - H. 43:1-7 God’s Commitment to Save His People by His Grace (43:1-7)
 - I. 43:8-13 The Servant Israel is the Lord’s Witness
 - J. 43:14-44:8 The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon
 - K. 44:9-20 Satire against Idolatry
 - L. 44:21-23 Israel is Forgiven and Redeemed
 - M. 44:24-45:13 God’s Calling and Commission of Cyrus
