

Monday, September 23

**All passages taken from Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996.
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189.
All rights reserved.**

Isaiah 41:17 - 43:13

41 17 “When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the LORD, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never abandon them. **18** I will open up rivers for them on the high plateaus. I will give them fountains of water in the valleys. I will fill the desert with pools of water. Rivers fed by springs will flow across the parched ground. **19** I will plant trees in the barren desert— cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, cypress, fir, and pine. **20** I am doing this so all who see this miracle will understand what it means— that it is the LORD who has done this, the Holy One of Israel who created it. **21** “Present the case for your idols,” says the LORD . “Let them show what they can do,” says the King of Israel. **22** “Let them try to tell us what happened long ago so that we may consider the evidence. Or let them tell us what the future holds, so we can know what’s going to happen. **23** Yes, tell us what will occur in the days ahead. Then we will know you are gods. In fact, do anything—good or bad! Do something that will amaze and frighten us. **24** But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all. Those who choose you pollute themselves. **25** “But I have stirred up a leader who will approach from the north. From the east he will call on my name. I will give him victory over kings and princes. He will trample them as a potter treads on clay. **26** “Who told you from the beginning that this would happen? Who predicted this, making you admit that he was right? No one said a word! **27** I was the first to tell Zion, ‘Look! Help is on the way!’ I will send Jerusalem a messenger with good news. **28** Not one of your idols told you this. Not one gave any answer when I asked. **29** See, they are all foolish, worthless things. All your idols are as empty as the wind.

42 1 “Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. **2** He will not shout or raise his voice in public. **3** He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged. **4** He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction. ” **5** God, the LORD, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath to everyone, life to everyone who walks the earth. And it is he who says, **6** “I, the LORD, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a

light to guide the nations. **7** You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons. **8** "I am the LORD ; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols. **9** Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens." **10** Sing a new song to the LORD ! Sing his praises from the ends of the earth! Sing, all you who sail the seas, all you who live in distant coastlands. **11** Join in the chorus, you desert towns; let the villages of Kedar rejoice! Let the people of Sela sing for joy; shout praises from the mountaintops! **12** Let the whole world glorify the LORD ; let it sing his praise. **13** The LORD will march forth like a mighty hero; he will come out like a warrior, full of fury. He will shout his battle cry and crush all his enemies. **14** He will say, "I have long been silent; yes, I have restrained myself. But now, like a woman in labor, I will cry and groan and pant. **15** I will level the mountains and hills and blight all their greenery. I will turn the rivers into dry land and will dry up all the pools. **16** I will lead blind Israel down a new path, guiding them along an unfamiliar way. I will brighten the darkness before them and smooth out the road ahead of them. Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them. **17** But those who trust in idols, who say, 'You are our gods,' will be turned away in shame. **18** "Listen, you who are deaf! Look and see, you blind! **19** Who is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messenger? Who is as blind as my chosen people, the servant of the LORD ? **20** You see and recognize what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear with your ears, but you don't really listen." **21** Because he is righteous, the LORD has exalted his glorious law. **22** But his own people have been robbed and plundered, enslaved, imprisoned, and trapped. They are fair game for anyone and have no one to protect them, no one to take them back home. **23** Who will hear these lessons from the past and see the ruin that awaits you in the future? **24** Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? It was the LORD, against whom we sinned, for the people would not walk in his path, nor would they obey his law. **25** Therefore, he poured out his fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were enveloped in flames, but they still refused to understand. They were consumed by fire, but they did not learn their lesson.

43 **1** But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. **2** 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. **3** For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. **4** Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you. **5** "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will

gather you and your children from east and west. **6** I will say to the north and south, 'Bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. **7** Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.'" **8** Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. **9** Gather the nations together! Assemble the peoples of the world! Which of their idols has ever foretold such things? Which can predict what will happen tomorrow? Where are the witnesses of such predictions? Who can verify that they spoke the truth? **10** "But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the LORD . "You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God— there never has been, and there never will be. **11** I, yes I, am the LORD, and there is no other Savior. **12** First I predicted your rescue, then I saved you and proclaimed it to the world. No foreign god has ever done this. You are witnesses that I am the only God," says the LORD . **13** "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can snatch anyone out of my hand. No one can undo what I have done."

Ephesians 2:1 - 22

2 1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. **2** You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **3** All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. **4** But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, **5** that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) **6** For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. **7** So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. **8** God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. **10** For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. **11** Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. **12** In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without

hope. **13** But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. **14** For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. **15** He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. **16** Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. **17** He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. **18** Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. **19** So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. **20** Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. **21** We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. **22** Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Psalm 67:1 - 7

67 1 May God be merciful and bless us. May his face smile with favor on us. Interlude **2** May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere. **3** May the nations praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you. **4** Let the whole world sing for joy, because you govern the nations with justice and guide the people of the whole world. Interlude **5** May the nations praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you. **6** Then the earth will yield its harvests, and God, our God, will richly bless us. **7** Yes, God will bless us, and people all over the world will fear him.

Proverbs 23:29 - 35

23 29 Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? **30** It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. **31** Don't gaze at the wine, seeing how red it is, how it sparkles in the cup, how smoothly it goes down. **32** For in the end it bites like a poisonous snake; it stings like a viper. **33** You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. **34** You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. **35** And you

will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can look for another drink?"