

Tuesday, September 24

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Isaiah 43:14 - 45:10

43 14 This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sakes I will send an army against Babylon, forcing the Babylonians to flee in those ships they are so proud of. **15** I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel’s Creator and King. **16** I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea. **17** I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses. I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned, their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick. **18** “But forget all that— it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. **19** For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. **20** The wild animals in the fields will thank me, the jackals and owls, too, for giving them water in the desert. Yes, I will make rivers in the dry wasteland so my chosen people can be refreshed. **21** I have made Israel for myself, and they will someday honor me before the whole world. **22** “But, dear family of Jacob, you refuse to ask for my help. You have grown tired of me, O Israel! **23** You have not brought me sheep or goats for burnt offerings. You have not honored me with sacrifices, though I have not burdened and wearied you with requests for grain offerings and frankincense. **24** You have not brought me fragrant calamus or pleased me with the fat from sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults. **25** “I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. **26** Let us review the situation together, and you can present your case to prove your innocence. **27** From the very beginning, your first ancestor sinned against me; all your leaders broke my laws. **28** That is why I have disgraced your priests; I have decreed complete destruction for Jacob and shame for Israel.

44 1 “But now, listen to me, Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. **2** The LORD who made you and helps you says: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, O dear Israel, my chosen one. **3** For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children. **4** They will thrive like watered grass, like willows on a riverbank. **5** Some will proudly claim, ‘I belong to the LORD.’ Others will say, ‘I am a descendant of Jacob.’ Some will write the LORD’s name on their hands and will take the name of Israel as their own.” **6** This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies: “I am the First and the Last; there is no other

God. **7** Who is like me? Let him step forward and prove to you his power. Let him do as I have done since ancient times when I established a people and explained its future. **8** Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim my purposes for you long ago? You are my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!” **9** How foolish are those who manufacture idols. These prized objects are really worthless. The people who worship idols don’t know this, so they are all put to shame. **10** Who but a fool would make his own god— an idol that cannot help him one bit? **11** All who worship idols will be disgraced along with all these craftsmen—mere humans— who claim they can make a god. They may all stand together, but they will stand in terror and shame. **12** The blacksmith stands at his forge to make a sharp tool, pounding and shaping it with all his might. His work makes him hungry and weak. It makes him thirsty and faint. **13** Then the wood-carver measures a block of wood and draws a pattern on it. He works with chisel and plane and carves it into a human figure. He gives it human beauty and puts it in a little shrine. **14** He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the pine in the forest to be nourished by the rain. **15** Then he uses part of the wood to make a fire. With it he warms himself and bakes his bread. Then—yes, it’s true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god to worship! He makes an idol and bows down in front of it! **16** He burns part of the tree to roast his meat and to keep himself warm. He says, “Ah, that fire feels good.” **17** Then he takes what’s left and makes his god: a carved idol! He falls down in front of it, worshiping and praying to it. “Rescue me!” he says. “You are my god!” **18** Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. **19** The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, “Why, it’s just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a piece of wood?” **20** The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He trusts something that can’t help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, “Is this idol that I’m holding in my hand a lie?” **21** “Pay attention, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I, the LORD, made you, and I will not forget you. **22** I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free.” **23** Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done this wondrous thing. Shout for joy, O depths of the earth! Break into song, O mountains and forests and every tree! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and is glorified in Israel. **24** This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer and Creator: “I am the LORD, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. Who was with me when I made the earth? **25** I expose the false prophets as liars and make fools of fortune-tellers. I cause the wise to give bad advice, thus proving them to be fools. **26** But I carry out the predictions of my prophets! By them I say to Jerusalem, ‘People will live here again,’ and to the towns of Judah, ‘You will be rebuilt; I will restore all your ruins!’ **27** When I speak to the rivers and say, ‘Dry up!’ they will be dry. **28** When I say of Cyrus,

‘He is my shepherd,’ he will certainly do as I say. He will command, ‘Rebuild Jerusalem’; he will say, ‘Restore the Temple.’”

45 **1** This is what the LORD says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never to shut again. **2** This is what the LORD says: “I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains. I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. **3** And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness— secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name. **4** “And why have I called you for this work? Why did I call you by name when you did not know me? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. **5** I am the LORD ; there is no other God. I have equipped you for battle, though you don’t even know me, **6** so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God. I am the LORD, and there is no other. **7** I create the light and make the darkness. I send good times and bad times. I, the LORD, am the one who does these things. **8** “Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. I, the LORD, created them. **9** “What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, ‘Stop, you’re doing it wrong!’ Does the pot exclaim, ‘How clumsy can you be?’ **10** How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father, ‘Why was I born?’ or if it said to its mother, ‘Why did you make me this way?’”

Ephesians 3:1 - 21

3 **1** When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles . . . **2** assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. **3** As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. **4** As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. **5** God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. **6** And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. **7** By God’s grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. **8** Though I am the least deserving of all God’s people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. **9** I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator

of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. **10** God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. **11** This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. **12** Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. **13** So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored. **14** When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. **17** Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. **20** Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. **21** Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

Psalms 68:1 - 18

68 1 Rise up, O God, and scatter your enemies. Let those who hate God run for their lives. **2** Blow them away like smoke. Melt them like wax in a fire. Let the wicked perish in the presence of God. **3** But let the godly rejoice. Let them be glad in God's presence. Let them be filled with joy. **4** Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the LORD — rejoice in his presence! **5** Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. **6** God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy. But he makes the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. **7** O God, when you led your people out from Egypt, when you marched through the dry wasteland, Interlude **8** the earth trembled, and the heavens poured down rain before you, the God of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. **9** You sent abundant rain, O God, to refresh the weary land. **10** There your people finally settled, and with a bountiful harvest, O God, you provided for your needy people. **11** The Lord gives the word, and a great army brings the good news. **12** Enemy kings and their armies flee, while the women of Israel divide the plunder. **13** Even those who lived among the sheepfolds found treasures— doves with wings of silver and feathers of gold. **14** The Almighty scattered the enemy kings like a blowing snowstorm on Mount Zalmon. **15** The mountains of Bashan are majestic, with many peaks stretching high

into the sky. **16** Why do you look with envy, O rugged mountains, at Mount Zion, where God has chosen to live, where the LORD himself will live forever? **17** Surrounded by unnumbered thousands of chariots, the Lord came from Mount Sinai into his sanctuary. **18** When you ascended to the heights, you led a crowd of captives. You received gifts from the people, even from those who rebelled against you. Now the LORD God will live among us there.

Proverbs 24:1 - 2

24 1 Don't envy evil people or desire their company. **2** For their hearts plot violence, and their words always stir up trouble.