

Isaiah 45:21,22

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[0 : 00] You know, as I study the Bible, one of the things that I love to do, I love to study themes in the Bible, motifs in the Bible, and see them appear in the Old Testament and see them move through the Scripture and see themes develop in the Bible.

And so we're going to look at one such theme this morning. It's a recurring theme in the Bible. It's a motif. We see it from beginning to end. And that is this, that our God is a God who saves. Our God is a Savior. Our God is a God of salvation.

But rather than look at this throughout the whole Bible, we're going to look at this in one chapter, in Isaiah chapter 45, and we'll particularly be focusing on verses 21 and 22.

Our God is a God who saves. You may be saying, well, this is self-evident. This is obvious. All Christians know this. We could never pay for our sins. We cannot save ourselves. Why talk about the fact that our God is a God of salvation?

You know, it's easy to know something theologically, but not live it on a heart level. Let me tell you what I've discovered in my own heart. I have a tendency toward self-salvation.

[1 : 34] You know, we need to be saved in two senses. We need to be saved from sin and its consequences. We need to be forgiven so that we can be on our way to heaven.

But we need to be saved in another way as Christians. We need to be saved in the circumstances of life. We need God to save us in the problems in which we find ourselves confronted.

And you know, this is where I have a problem with self-salvation. My tendency is, whatever I face, my default mode is, what can I do about it? How can I work this out?

You know what that really is? That is, self-salvation. And the God who saves wants to save us not merely from sin and its consequences, but also in the circumstances of life.

Chapter 45 seems to address one particular specific situation in the history of God's people. God's people, when they were in the exile.

[2 : 45] But I believe it has a word for God's people in every age as we look to Him for His salvation. Let me just read you the verses I'm going to focus in on.

This is beginning in the middle of verse 21 and verse 22. And there is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a Savior.

There is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is none other.

Let's bow together in prayer. Father, we thank You today that we can look into Your Word. We thank You that that is the one place where we can go and find out the truth and know what is true and know what is real.

We thank You for the Word of truth. We thank You for Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. And we pray that today He would lead us into all truth as we look into Your Word.

[3 : 47] We thank You for the One who is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Father, we ask You now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that You would send Your Holy Spirit. As we look into Your Word, we pray that Your Spirit would be our teacher.

We pray that Your Spirit would show us the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that Your Spirit would show us Your great salvation. May we see You as God our Savior. We thank You for what You will do as we look into Your Word.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Before we look at these two verses, I just want to look at what's going on right here.

What is the historical context? A calamity is coming upon God's people. The exile, because of their idolatry, God will discipline His people.

And it will be severe discipline. God is going to send the mighty army of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem. And the temple.

[4 : 51] And the walls of the city. And take His people captive to a foreign land. First to Babylon, and then to Persia. And Isaiah writes about this at least a hundred years before it happened.

But what is more amazing right here in chapter 45, Isaiah more than 200 years before the fact, prophesies how God is going to save His people from captivity.

How He's going to bring them back to Jerusalem. This is in verse 1. Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Sidus, whose right hand I've grasped, to subdue nations before me, and to loose the bell of kings, to open doors before Him, that gates may not be closed.

God is going to raise up a king, a mighty king, a Persian king. God is going to bring him to power. God will give him military success. He'll become the most powerful person on the face of this earth. And for what reason? Look down in verse 13. I have stirred him up. That is Cyrus. In righteousness I will make on his ways level. He shall build my city.

[6 : 04] God will use him that Jerusalem would be rebuilt. The walls of the temple. And I will use it to set my exiles free. This man, Cyrus, this Persian king, will be God's man for this job.

Look in verse 3. He says, I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by name. Verse 1, God even calls him His anointed. This is a special man for a special job.

Something very interesting here in both verse 4 and 5. It says, speaking to Cyrus, God says, you do not know me. So, do you see how these words function?

The words here in chapter 45. You know, they're written 200 years before the fact. But I believe that these are words that God has given for His people in exile.

You know, these are people who are, from a human perspective, there's little hope. Their city's been destroyed. Their temple's been destroyed. The walls have been destroyed. They've been taken captive.

[7 : 13] They're the far land. And from a human perspective, there's very little hope. But God gives them words to hold on to. And to words to trust in.

And what is He telling them to do in this chapter? He's telling them to look to me as your salvation. He's saying, here, I'll raise up a Savior.

In this context, unbelievably, it's a pagan king. He's not a believer. He doesn't know God. You know, aren't God's ways different from our ways?

When things are hopeless for God's people from a human perspective, God saves them and takes them back to their land and rebuilds their city, rebuilds their temple, rebuilds the walls, in a way they never would have dreamed.

You know, isn't that God's way in dealing with us? Things look hopeless. There's nothing we can do about it. We cannot see on the horizon any possible way that things can be made right.

[8 : 18] And then God does something unexpected. Something that we never would have dreamed of. So, this is talking about the salvation that God is going to affect for His people through this Persian king, Cyrus.

But it's very interesting. The language here of this salvation goes beyond mere salvation from the captivity. This is more than just salvation in one particular time and place in the history of God's people.

It says in verse 17, this salvation is everlasting salvation. It says in verse 22, this salvation is more than salvation just for one nation.

This is for all the earth. It says in verse 24 that this salvation is personal. It's not just national.

This is a salvation in verse 24 where God's people find righteousness and strength. Here's a salvation in verse 25 where all the offspring of Israel shall be justified.

[9 : 28] You see, the language here, it goes beyond what God will do in this salvation, taking His people back to Jerusalem. The salvation in the book of Exodus.

The salvation from slavery in Egypt. The salvation from the exile. You know, these are just pictures, aren't they? They are God's salvation, but they're pictures of a yet greater salvation.

A cosmic salvation. An eternal salvation for all of God's people. That God does by God's true anointed.

The Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Savior. We look at verses 21 and 22. And from these verses, I want us to see three things. Number one, God is the Savior and we are not.

And number two, God saves those who look to Him. And number three, God's salvation is for the whole world. Number one, God is the Savior and we are not.

[10:34] In verse 21 and verse 22, God makes this point. I am the only God. 21b, there is no other God besides me.

There is none besides me. 22b, for I am God and there is no other. Early in the chapter, in verse 5, I am the Lord. There is no other. Besides me, there is no God.

In the chapter before, in chapter 44, I am the first. I am the last. Beside me, there is no God. Now, here is the argument that Isaiah is going to make.

Because I am the only God. Therefore, I am the only Savior. Isaiah has already said it in 43.11.

I am the Lord and besides me, there is no Savior. You see what he is saying to God's people in the exile? You don't have any other home. The problems that you face are God-sized problems.

[11:37] You can't get yourself out of this pickle. You need me. I am the only one who can save you. Brothers and sisters, is that not true for us?

Are not the problems that we face beyond this? Are not the problems that we face too big for us? Let me tell you, there is not one of us that does not face a problem in our lives that is God-sized. Something that we face that in ourselves we can't do anything about that only God can save us from. I tell you, we are all there.

And this is a word for us. You know, we need to be saved again in two senses. We need to be saved from sin and its consequences. We cannot do that.

What person can pay for his own sins? But we also need to be saved in the problems of life, in the circumstances of life. And again, my default mode is self-salvation.

[12:47] Immediately, I want to think, what can I do about my problem? If I can just try a little harder, maybe I can fix this. Here's what I do.

I tend to divide life into two categories. Number one, the things for which I need God. The big problems of life.

The things that I need to pray about. The things that I know only God can save me from. And in. But the second category is this. Things that I can handle on my own.

The little things. These problems are not so big. I think I can take care of them. I think I'm adequate for them. Two categories. The things for which I need God. The big problems. And the things that I think I can handle on my own.

The little problems. You know what I've been discovering? The second category does not exist. It's not a real category.

[13:46] It's mythical. There's nothing that I'm adequate for. There's no circumstance that I do not need God in that circumstance. There's no task that I face that I'm adequate for.

I need a God of salvation. I need Him to save me from my sin and from its consequences. But I need God to be my Savior every day of my life. In every situation that I face.

So brothers and sisters. This is a really good word for us. You know there's a great illustration of this in scripture. It's in Exodus chapter 15. You remember the story.

God is delivering His people out of Egypt. Under Moses. They observed the Passover. They left that night leaving Egypt. In haste.

And you all know the story. Pharaoh sends his armies in pursuit. And the people arrive at the Red Sea. And what happens? They're trapped.

[14:46] On one side. The Red Sea. On the other side. Pharaoh's army. There is no way out. And what does God say to them?

He says. Stand still. And see. The salvation of the Lord. Let me tell you brothers and sisters.

The reality is. This is where you and I are. Every day. Every day. We face circumstances.

In which from a human perspective. There is no way out. Every day. We've got Pharaoh's army on one side. We've got the Red Sea on the other side. And what does God tell us to do?

Stand still. And see the salvation of the Lord. And we all know what God did. The wonderful deliverance. Opening the Red Sea. They passed over. On the right around next chapter.

[15:47] Where did the people sing? The Lord. The Lord. Has become my salvation. Brothers and sisters. In reality. That is where we are.

We need to remember. The word here. There is no other God. There is no other Savior. But he is a Savior.

We've seen God as the Savior. And we are not. This brings us to our second point. God saves those who look to him. Look at the first part of verse 22.

Turn to me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. We all know how God saves. From the New Testament. For me your words. Ephesians 2.8 For by grace.

You have been saved. Through. Faith. Faith is God's way to receive salvation. But in verse 22. How are we saved?

[16:48] How is faith described here in verse 22? Turn to me and be saved. Faith is described as turning. The Hebrew verb there means.

To turn. To face. Or to look to. I like. I like one translation that says. Look to me. And be saved.

So here is salvation by. Looking. Does that ring a bell? Does that remind you of anything in the Old Testament? In the life of God's people?

Numbers 21. God had brought his people. Out of Egypt. He had miraculously delivered them from Egypt. He is taking them to the promised land. They ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

A new generation has been born. And now he is taking them into the promised land. And just like their fathers. Their people. These people. They don't grumble. And complain against the Lord.

[17:47] And God disciplines them. What does he do? He sends snakes. He sends serpents to bite them. And this is a deadly bite. This is a snake bite from which they will not recover.

But God not only disciplines them in this way. What does he do? He provides salvation. From that deadly snake bite. And it is very interesting the way God does it.

This is Numbers 21.9. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone. He would look at the bronze servant.

And live. Does that remind you of anything in the New Testament? Does that remind you of Christ? And his cross? It should. A pole. Upon which is a snake. It is a picture of sin. It is made of bronze.

[18:54] It signifies judgment. That is a picture. Of the cross of Christ. Not surprisingly. Jesus picked up on this incident.

Here is what Jesus said. In John chapter 3. Verses 14 and 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. So must the son of man be lifted up.

That whoever believes in him. May have eternal life. How were these people saved in Numbers 21? What did they have to do to be saved?

All they had to do was to look. Brothers and sisters. There is a sense in which faith is looking.

And from the New Testament we know that faith is looking at the person of Christ. And what he has done. You know we can describe two things.

[19:54] Looking at faith in this way as looking. We can see there are really two things involved in faith. In faith what do we do? We look away from ourselves.

We look away from our problems. We look away from our sins. We look away from our righteousnesses. From our religious achievements. And we turn our focus and our vision on the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we consider what he has done. And we trust in it. And we rest in it. You know this gives us insight. What true faith is. And what it is not.

You know there are some teachers. And there are some preachers. They are called the word of faith preachers. Or they are called the health and wealth preachers. And they say you can use your faith.

To get what you want. If you have faith. You can cause God to give you healing. You can cause him to give you wealth. You can use your faith in a sense to manipulate God.

[20:57] To get what you want. Do you see what the problem with that is? You're not looking at Christ and his cross.

You're looking at your faith. What is faith? Faith is not looking at faith. Faith is not considering our faith.

Faith is looking at the object of our faith. That's what saints is. It's the object of our faith that saints. And to have faith is to look away from ourselves.

To look away from our sins. From our problems. From our righteousnesses. And even to look away from our faith. To look at the object of faith. The Lord Jesus Christ. Let me tell you.

The older I get the more I wake up in the middle of the night. And sometimes as I wake up in the middle of the night. I wake up and I'm very anxious. Problems are just filling my mind.

[21 : 58] What am I going to do about this? What am I going to do about this? Does that happen to you? Do you wake up in the middle of the night? Anxious about things? Worried about things?

I suspect that I'm not the only one who does that. What is the remedy for that for me? What helps me when my faith is weak and when I'm anxious?

You know what? To take the Bible. And to read. About the person and the work of Christ.

To change my focus. From me. And from what's going on with me. To Jesus. And what he has done.

For me. I like Psalm 168. I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand. I shall not be moved.

[23 : 01] Brothers and sisters. God is our salvation. He is our salvation from sin and its consequences. He is our salvation. In all the circumstances of life.

And what does he say? He said. Look. To me. Turn your focus. And attention on me. I will be your salvation.

Last thing I want us to see. God's salvation is for the whole world. It says in verse 22. First part. He says. Turn to me and be saved.

All. The ends. Of the earth. You know. We tend to think of salvation. In very individual. Individualistic.

Terms. You see why I had to get out of broadcasting. We tend to think of it. In those terms. God saving me. From my sins. God saving me. From my problems.

[23 : 58] But let me tell you. God's salvation. It's big. It's really big. It's bigger than just me. It's bigger than just my church. It's bigger than just my denomination. Or my family.

Or my country. God's salvation is worldwide. It's colossal. It is cosmic. It's not just you. It's corporate. It's a body of people. A worldwide body of people.

We see it in the New Testament. Acts chapter 2. The day of Pentecost. We see people. Coming. Into God's church. From many different countries. We see it in the Old Testament.

We see the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. Genesis 12. 3. And you. All the families of the earth shall be blessed. We see it in the Psalms. All the families of nations. Shall worship before you. This is Psalm 107. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Who means redeemed from trouble. And gathered in from lands. From east. And from west. From north. And from south. We see it here in the book of Isaiah.

[24 : 59] Just two chapters before. Chapter 43. This is verse 6 and 7. I will say to the north. Give up. And to the south. Do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar. And my daughters from the ends of the earth.

Everyone who is called by my name. Whom I created for my glory. Whom I formed and made. You know. This is more than just.

Exiles returning to Jerusalem. This is people coming from every corner of the earth. From every ethnicity. This is a worldwide church.

This is what God is doing. It's a great salvation. Salvation is personal for you and me. It is God saving us from sin and its consequences.

It is God saving us from the problems of life. But it's corporate. It's universal. It's a people. A worldwide people. People who will be God's eternally. This is the fulfillment of the picture.

[25 : 55] In Revelation 5 and 7. Around the throne of God forever. Will be a people from every kindred. And tribe. And tongue. And nation.

God saves us from every kindred. We've seen these three points this morning. God is the Savior. We are not. God saves those who look to him. And God's salvation is for the whole world.

I want to ask you this morning. What are you facing? That you need God to save you from? What God-sized problem is in your life?

What is in your life that you, yourself, are powerless to change? That you need God to be a Savior for you?

Is it financial problems? Maybe no job? Maybe an inadequate job? What is God's word to you? Look to me and be saved.

[26 : 56] Maybe it's relational problems. Maybe it's problems in your marriage. Maybe it's problems with a neighbor. A work colleague. What is God's word to you? Look to me and be saved.

Maybe it's problems with a child. An unbelieving, rebellious child. Something that you cannot do anything about. What is God's word to you? Look to me and be saved.

But there's one last thing I want us to consider here. We need a Savior. We cannot save ourselves. Either from sin and its consequences.

We cannot save ourselves from the problems of life. But there is a problem here. We don't deserve to be saved. Do we? We've sinned.

We've rebelled against our God. We don't deserve salvation. In fact, we deserve the opposite. We deserve His judgment. How can we expect God to save people like us?

[27 : 57] Sinful people who've rebelled against Him. Let me show you something very interesting here. It's right there in verse 21. And there is no other God besides me.

A righteous God. And a Savior. Have you ever thought of this? Our God is both. He's both righteous.

He's a God of holiness. Justice. Wrath. Against sin. Judgment against sin. And yet not only is He a righteous God. At the same time, He is a Savior.

He is a merciful God. Who saves sinners like me and you. People who don't deserve it. How can this be? How can God be both?

You know the answer to that question. The cross of Christ. It's right here in the book of Isaiah.

[28 : 56] Isaiah chapter 53. Words Isaiah wrote prophetically 700 years before the fact. Hear these words. Brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters. Let them wash over you.

Surely He has borne our griefs and cured our sorrows. Yet we esteem Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to His own way.

And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. How can God save people who don't deserve it? How can God save people who deserve His judgment and not His salvation? The God man. On the cross.

[29 : 57] Taking the righteous and just punishment for our sin. In order that He might be to us a merciful Savior.

To sinners like me and you. In order that He might say to me and to you. Turn to me. Look to me. And be saved. Let's pray.