

God Himself

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Please look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 45 and I've entitled this message simply "God Himself." God Himself. People ask why certain things happen the way they do, God himself purposed it. When people wonder how is it that sinners are saved, God himself does it and I can't think of a better portion of Scripture than what Brother Lane read for us in Deuteronomy 4 to prepare us for what we're about to read here in Isaiah 45. I know people like to ask, "What book would you recommend that best describes God's attributes?" Well, it's the one you're holding in your hand. It's the one that God himself has written and revealed of himself so there's a lot in that particular title, God Himself.

Let's read beginning with verse 1, Isaiah 45,

1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; 2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. 7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. 8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. 9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? 10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? 11 Thus saith 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 command ye me. 12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. 14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. 15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. 17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. 19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. 21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. 25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Lord willing, we'll look at that further in verse 20 down to 25 next time but I want us to consider here in verses 1 through 20 this expression "God Himself." In reality, does God need any explanation? A lot of books are written trying to explain that when we read his book he doesn't offer us any long presentation as to his origin, to his being. In fact, this word opens up very simply, "In the beginning God." People like to stop there and say, "Well, let's explain. Let's talk about who he is and what he does." The Scripture just says, "In the beginning God." If you want to know who he is and what he does, continue to read. The whole of Scripture is his revelation of himself and who better to ask, who better to learn from than him who is and who does what he does alone. Now, natural minded

fallen creatures would call him to account but we know what he has revealed of himself, he answers to none but himself so the title "God Himself."

Now, if you were to turn an early authority to answer to none but himself, that's where you get dictatorships, you get men going foul because of the depravity of their heart but God is not like men. He is holy and just. In him is no shadow of turning and those that he has taught by his grace can rest in that truth that he answers to none but himself because he's true to himself. There is no one of his attributes that is lessened in order for him to act. That's one of the things we've come to learn as we read his word and as he teaches us, that there is no contradiction between his mercy and his truth when dealing with sinners such as we are. If he saves, he saves in a truthful manner and if he saves, he saves in a merciful manner. One is not lessened for the other. You see, we can't put that together. When we're put in situations of compromise, we always think, "Well, I've got to make it diminish the truth in order for this to be reality." We can't handle that, but with God there is no disparity. We can be sure that those he saved, he saved in a just a righteous way. Those he condemns, he condemns in a just and righteous manner.

So we see these key verses, for example, verse 15 that I read for you where it says, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself." When we talk about God himself, there are different ways of it being put. Here's a God who hides himself. Given a million years, we could never study him and ever exhaust who he is. He's infinite but he answers to no man. He seeks counsel of no person. He doesn't need advisement in order to act and so when it says he hides himself, it means that looking forward, none of us can predict or determine what he's going to do based on what he's done in the past. A lot of times we think we can, "Well, this is how he acted here so this must be then how he's going to act in this situation." He's God and it's his prerogative to do what he will.

In verse 18, we see that attribute again, "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain." We look around this world and we see certain things we can't explain so we wonder, "Why on earth did God even make it?" I don't know. Why did he make gnats? What is there a purpose of them? We're always swatting them, always trying to kill them but they are God's creatures. Flies? I guess their life span is 24 hours. A lot of times you think that fly you see tomorrow is the one you saw yesterday but according to what I'm told, no, it can't be. Maybe it's one of the young ones that hatched and is flying around but you think, "Why did he create a fly?" I heard someone say that the other day, "What's the purpose of an appendix?" It seems like it's there and you go in and take it out at a certain time. No one can really define what its function is as an important organ in the body. The only thing I know from what it says here, he created it not in vain. Whether you figure it out or not, whether you find an answer to it or not. It's like students who say in school, "Why do we have to study this? I'll never use it." Well, the Lord made it for some purpose and caused men to discover it and put it in a textbook and has caused it to be taught. There is nothing that exists but what the Lord did it with purpose and that's the glory due his name.

Here in Isaiah 45:23, again, he says, "I have sworn by myself." Does God even have to swear? No, but when he, himself, puts his name to something, you can trust his word and that's how he reveals himself here. It's not a matter of him conforming to our understanding but rather us being brought into conformity to his will and to his ways. Whatever is in your mind right now in a situation that you're struggling with, believe me, you are wrestling with God because it wouldn't exist had he not appointed it for you and for me. That's something I have to constantly be reminded about. The Lord brings me to the mat as I often say. People ask, "How was your week?" Well, the Lord took me to the mat. We might say, "So-and-so took me to the mat or this situation took me to the mat," but I'm just like Jacob wrestling with the Lord there and how often we do, but do you know, the Lord is going to have his way and he will show himself to be sovereign. Anything less is idolatry and atheism.

You know, when the Lord repeatedly states here as we saw in verse 6, "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." You know, that this is what the Lord used to show me that I was an idolater and that I was an atheist. I used to think, "Well, different people have different views of God," and I tried to justify the differences by saying, "We're all kind of looking to the same God but from different perspectives," and I tried to marry the view of God's sovereignty with the view of man's free will and are you with the best of them that it's just a matter of how we look at it until the Lord caused me to see that, no, there is only one way to view God. He is either sovereign or he isn't.

He is either absolute in what he does and what he purposes or he's not and to be brought to see that to take an opposing view of what this book and what God himself reveals of himself is to make myself an atheist and an idolater is to prove myself to be such. If the Lord has never showed you that, may he be pleased to do so because atheism, a- means against, theos means God. You stand opposed to God and that's really what a fool says in his heart. There in Psalm 14 if you look back there real quickly, Psalm 14. I've had some people in some situations come up to me after a message like this and ask me, "Let me make this clear, you're saying if we don't hold your view of God then you're saying we're atheists?" I will quickly respond, "It's not holding my view of God, it's holding what God says of himself." I'm doing nothing more than reading to you his word. He is either God or there is none other. That's what he, himself, said.

And a fool, as it says in Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart." Notice, "there is" is in italic so in reality, "The fool hath said in his heart no God." In other words, as I said of pride, "we will not have this man to reign over us." It's a rebellion of the heart. To come away from this word with any other view of God than who he declares himself to be is to mark yourself for what you are, an idolater and an atheist.

The Lord repeatedly in this portion says there is none other. We read it in Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." 44:8 from last time, "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God." Then Isaiah 45:5 that we just read, "I am the LORD, and there is none else." Conversation over. "No God

beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." You see, that does away completely with this idea that God is waiting for you to do something before he can do something. He said, "I grided thee, though thou hast not know me."

Verse 14 of Isaiah 45, "Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt." Everybody talks about how most things that we have today were invented back in Egypt and likely so. They even had air conditioning back then, indoor plumbing back in the day. They had ways that we've just kind of built on and developed further. "The merchandise of Ethiopia." That was the hot spot of the day. That was the New York City of commerce, Ethiopia and Africa. "And of the Sabeans." Those are the ones that came in a day and took everything away from Job. They were marauders. They traveled and robbed. They were the pirates of the day. "Men of stature," that it says here, "shall come over unto thee." He's talking about these that to that point had been independent people and nations. The Lord would bring them under the rule and reign of this one, Cyrus, that he mentions in verse 1 of Isaiah 45 and he says, "they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, " what? Not how great you are but, "Surely God is in thee; and there is none else." God will even cause the wrath of the wicked to praise him, such a God is he.

And you see in verse 21 the same thing, "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together." All the idolaters together. Let them gather. "Who hath declared this from ancient time?" Who could have ever thought that what was about to happen would happen? He's talking about Babylon falling, the powerhouse of the day, and yet that strength and power was dependent upon the Lord. Not upon Nebuchadnezzar. In the night, the Lord would bring it all down. People would have a view of the United States of America like they did of Babylon of old. They assume that in another thousand years the United States is still going to be a powerhouse. Well, the foundations have been cracking and crumbling for a good while. I'd say 200 years is a long time. Some of us may live to see the day when it's all brought down. Even natural minded people are predicting it, looking at it. Kind of bury your head in the sand, "Don't bother me with the facts." Reality is everything on this earth is temporal and the Lord can undo in a moment. The only reason it still stands and I appreciate how, brother, you mentioned in your prayer. It is the privilege the Lord has given us to stand even on his earth right now. It's a mercy. Do we look at it that way or do we somehow assume that it's in our power. The Lord said, "Who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD?" Again he says, "there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour."

How is it then that God reveals himself and glorifies himself and declares himself alone as God? There are three particular ways here. Verse 1-3 of Isaiah 45, he glorifies himself in his providence and the outworking of his will. Providence is the unfolding of time, history, events, circumstances. Who is directing it all? Well, it's the Lord. It's the Lord. Does anything happen that's outside his will? Many people we talk to, philosophers, educators, they say, "Well, the world is divided in two: there is good and evil. There is a constant struggle." There is no struggle.

We know from this particular portion of Scripture, verse 7, the Lord said, "I form the light, and create darkness." There is no tug-of-war. "I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." I go back to the one thing that I've kept back in graduate school when our teacher walked in and put a big old circle on the chalkboard one day and he asked everybody to tell us, "Let's assume this circle is God. What belongs in that circle?" Everybody was putting only good things in there: blessing, health "What about Satan?" "Oh no." That was the response. I'm thankful the Lord corrected that professor that day to say, "No, Satan even goes in there." If there is anything outside this circle, then we're in trouble. If there is any random event that takes place, then we're in trouble.

If you consider here in verse 1 where the Lord said, "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus," how quickly we read over verses but you go back and study the history of this man, Cyrus, a wicked and ruthless king. As wicked and ruthless as you could ever imagine and yet the Lord calls him here his anointed one. In other words, just like Satan could not move a finger but what God ordained. Satan recognized that. He said, "You've got Job protected." Here God calls him, this wicked king Cyrus, his anointed one. One cannot read the Scriptures with eyes to see and not behold the sovereignty of God in all things, over all people and all events.

I'll have you look with me in Genesis 45:7. We may not get far. That's alright, we'll come back to this. Genesis 45:7, laying a foundation, once again, as to who God is. When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers after all that he had been through, notice the glory that he gave to his God. Verse 7 of Genesis 45, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." If you look at the hatred of Joseph's brothers, if you look at the lies that were told, if you look at the crooked road, the time he spent in prison, all these things and in the end when called to testify, he could say but one thing, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth."

I've talked to people who are bitter still about things that have taken place years ago that they cannot change, cannot undo, but they are still angry. They're depressed and when you tell them, "Well, you know, even that God purposed," you can see the anger coming out, "No, God wouldn't do that!" Well, you then are fighting God because he is the author of everything, of all things that happen in this world. God is not going to bow. You'll either bow or break. It's in those areas that we look to him for mercy and pray for this same spirit even as Joseph declared here before his wicked brethren, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth." There is a country western song that says, "God bless the broken road that led me straight to you." Isn't he the God as he declares here that he takes things that are crooked, as we read in verse 2 of Isaiah 45, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." It goes back at every bend in that road, every stone of stumbling, every pit, the Lord is in it, the Lord did it.

You look in Genesis 50:20, again, his brethren when they found out who he was, what a scary moment it must have been for them because there he was in those regal robes, this one that they had betrayed, hated, sold. Joseph in verse 19 said, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God?" Am I one to judge? "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God

meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." That's the God he is.

If you look over in Proverbs 16. Again, time would run out before we could exhaust all these Scriptures. I'm just giving you a few to consider but in Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways please the LORD," another way that that could be read is, "When it pleases the Lord to direct man's ways, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." He couldn't do that were he not absolutely sovereign. This is the reason he called Cyrus his anointed. Cyrus lived, moved and breathed according to the strength that God gave him.

If you look in verse 33, what men call chance, "Roll the dice. Let's just see what happens." "The lot is cast into the lap; but," what? "The whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." What is promotion, what is demotion, it's the Lord. In this he does his will even over the so-called free acts of men. You see, men, they are idolaters by nature. They like to make believe that somehow they have something to do with what's happening, what's going on. They want the glory.

We see God is sovereign in all and, yes, even in men's sinful acts. That's where some halt and they go, "There's a limit there." Well, if you look at Exodus 34:24, the Lord says, "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders," now notice this, "neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year." There were three times a year when the heads of the households were to go to Jerusalem. All the men were to leave and go up to Jerusalem to worship. Don't you think that that would leave their fields and their wives and children exposed? But lest any should worry and wonder whether they should go and worship or whether they were to stay and protect their goods, the Lord is saying here, "neither shall any man desire thy land while you're gone." Now, we're talking about wicked, evil men that covet other men's things and wives and children and yet the Lord said, "Not a one of them is going to even desire it while you're there for worship." Who but God can direct men's minds and hearts in such a way? Do you see why I say even over the so-called free acts of men? Men aren't free.

Look at Ecclesiastes 7:15. Solomon writes here, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness." He's talking about ones that are upright in men's eyes that for standing for the truth end up dying for their stand, and on the other hand, "there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness." How many times have you thought or told somebody, "If you keep living that way you're going to die young. You keep drinking, you keep smoking." And then all of a sudden someone pops up at 110 and they ask, "What's the secret to your long life," and they say, "I've drunk and smoked all my life. Chased women." They give glory to that and you're puzzled and think, "Whoa, how did that happen?" The Lord does it to confound men's wisdom. Our days are numbered by the Lord. He it is that determines these things.

There is a lot more to say there and the time has beaten me to death but in Isaiah 45, if you can retain this one point, then we'll pick up on this next time but God glorifies himself in his providence, in the outworking of his will. You think about this Cyrus in

verse 45. He made that famous attack on Babylon. There stood Babylon. I've read a little bit about this. Babylon had grown to be very rich and strong. It was 45 miles in diameter. A huge place. The walls were 32 feet thick and 100 cubits high. You take a cubit being 18 inches, you're looking at 50 yards high, the walls. Some say they were so thick that six chariots could drive abreast on top of them, six lanes around protecting this city. Yet it says here, "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him," not just Babylon but nations. As he mentions later: Ethiopia, Egypt, the Sabeans. And he says, "I will loose the loins of kings." To loose the loins is a kind way of saying everything breaks loose by fear. "To open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." I forget how many hundreds of gates there were that closed the doors and protected that city and yet the Lord is saying, "When it comes to my time, those gates are going to swing open and Cyrus will march in."

You say, "Why?" Well, we're going to study that a little bit later but just like the Lord sent Joseph down to Egypt to spare his brothers alive in that land, so he raised up a Cyrus to come in and bring this people out of captivity. The Lord said it would be for 70 years and guess what? It was 70 years and then it was time to go exactly as the Lord purposed it. No matter how strong that nation was.

And the Lord delivered them at the strength of the nation of the enemy, not at its weakness, at its strength, the Lord delivered them. You see what a type of picture that is of our Lord Jesus Christ? There is something to be said here even of that word "anointed." "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed," to his Christ, "whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." Christ said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail." If there is one that the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to pay the debt to deliver, there is not a gate of hell that is going to hold him in. He'll have every one. I'm thankful.

That's just an appetizer. Go back and read that again and, Lord willing, we'll pick up that the next time as the Lord directs.