

Chosen for Blessing

Isaiah 41:1-29

Halifax: 25 July 2010

Introduction:

My dear brothers and sisters,

- What sweet and comforting words we have heard from the prophet Isaiah since we began chapter 40.
 - In chapter 39, the prophet had just declared the demise of Jerusalem by the hand of Babylon.
 - For the godly in Judah, this would have seemed very discouraging...
 - How could it be that Jerusalem, which God had protected for so long from her enemies, should fall?
 - How could it be that the temple where God was revealed as reconciled by the blood of the covenant could be flattened?
 - How could it be that the sons of David, whose house was to have a son on the throne forever, should be made eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon?
- But when we get to chapter 40, we hear sweet words of comfort spoken to God's people.
 - Words that were designed for those who were to go to exile in Babylon...
 - But words that speak comfort to every generation of God's people who find themselves in the wilderness of this world of sin and sorrow.
 - The LORD promises that the time will come when He Himself will come for the salvation of His people!
 - The very LORD Jehovah Himself will come to do the work!
 - They are to prepare for Him by repentance—repentance that He will grant to those whom He has chosen for salvation...
 - repentance from pride and self-sufficiency and wilfulness.
 - They are to meet their coming LORD with humility as those mindful of their desperate need of His salvation.
 - And the LORD declares that even though they will be reduced to nothing but dust and rubble,
 - His Word shall stand.
 - Because He endures forever and so do His promises and grace to His people!
 - He is telling them ahead of time that even though it will appear that the promises have been completely forgotten,
 - He will come and He will restore them and bring to them all that He has spoken.
 - "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God endures forever!"

- Last week we saw that God comes to comfort us even more by reminding us just who He is who stands behind His Word.
 - He knows that our assurance is weakened when we lose sight of His glory and majesty, so He refreshes us in the remembrance of these things.
 - He reminds us that He is the One who called the heaven and earth into being by the word of His power, and that it is by Him that all things hold together!
 - He reminds us that He is the One who determines the destiny of the nations, raising up one for His purposes and putting down another.
 - There is no one that can even begin to be compared to Him!
 - As Creator, He is on an entirely different level from everything else.
 - And because this is so, it is absolutely certain that though Israel be brought down to nothing but dust,
 - It is not because God is weary or has lost interest in them and His promise to them!
 - No indeed!
 - Those who wait on the LORD (looking to Him and trusting in Him) will renew their strength!
 - They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
 - They shall run and not be weary,
 - They shall walk and not faint!

I showed you that we ought not to be so dull as to forget who God is when trouble comes upon us. We have this revelation to help us.

- He is God.
- He has not forgotten His promises.
- His word abides forever!

And now we come to chapter 41 where the LORD exposes the folly of turning to idols for comfort when there is a living God who has made Himself known.

- He summons the nations to give an account for what possible reason they have to turn to idols when there is a living God who rules among the nations.
 - And at the very heart of the passage, He speaks gracious words to us, His people, to assure us that we do not need to be afraid in the face of our enemies.
 - He has chosen us to be His servants, and His promises to us will not fail!
- Brothers and sisters, it is another passage of encouragement!
 - There are so many covenant people in our day, as in Isaiah's day, who have lost hope in God's promises!
 - They are not waiting upon the LORD, but are busy redefining God according to their own imaginations.

- That is idolatry...
 - And this passage sweetly summons us to trust in God who is the sole director of history—
 - who alone has destiny in His hands and to flee from idols.
- The chapter opens with a courtroom scene...
 - Where the nations are called to defend their worship of idols.
 - See first of all how...

I. God summons the nations and charges them with turning to idols when it was clear that He is LORD.

- A. See how He solemnly calls them to come before Him to make their argument in v. 1:
- Isa 41:1: Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, And let the people renew their strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; Let us come near together for judgment.
1. You see that this is a call to the nations, both near and far, to come together with God for judgement.
 - He is the Judge who summons them, and yet He is also a witness.
 - This is because there is no one above Him to whom judgement can be referred.
 - You see that He summons them from the coastlands—from the far away places.
 - Clearly, He is in authority as He orders them to be silent in the court until it is their turn to speak.
 2. And they will be given the chance to defend themselves if they can—
 - a. With irony, He bids them to renew their strength...
 - The very thing He had just promised to do for His people at the end of chapter 40... just one verse prior to this summons...
 - It is irony because without God,
 - these nations have no ability to renew their strength!
 - They have no refuge and no real defence in their idols.
 - b. Yet, they are invited to renew their strength in order that they may speak.
 - The purpose is judgement... judgement in righteousness.
 - They will be given a fair trial if they have anything to say to defend themselves!
 3. Know, my friends, that we will all be called before God.
 - a. There will be no disorder in the court when we come before Him.

- b. We will all be called upon to give an account of what we have done.
 - c. Everything will be brought to justice and judgement.
 - There will be no deception, not skirting of issues, no denial, no twisting of the facts, no redefining of right and wrong.
 - There will be pure judgement.
 - No one will go away from that trial saying that false judgement has been rendered.
 - Everyone will be convinced that pure justice has been exercised.
- B. See how the LORD makes it clear that He alone is LORD in verses 2-4.
- They had not business worshipping idols!
1. He begins with a question that was very relevant to their times:
 - He asks them,
 - “Who raised up one from the east?”
 - a. The word “raised up” does not just speak of empowering someone, but of actually bringing them forth upon the scene of history...
 - It speaks of giving them initial impulse to act.
 - The question does not limit itself to only one person that was raised up, but is more literally,
 - “Who has raised up from the east.”
 - In other words, it is not necessary “Who has raised up one from the east,”
 - But may be translated, “Who has raised up those from the east.”
 - b. This is to be preferred because over the centuries God had raised up many from the east to carry out His purposes.
 - First, there was Abraham from Ur who was raised up from the east and called to serve God...coming to Palestine...
 - Then in the days of Isaiah, there was the Assyrian empire which invaded Palestine from the east.
 - Then there was the Babylonian Empire which God was going to raise up from the east as had now been declared by Isaiah in chapter 39...
 - And next there would be the raising up of Persia, even of Cyrus who would also come from the east.

- c. This raising up of persons from the east to come and conquer this region was clearly done by the LORD...
 - Because in every case, He had declared long before they came that He was going to raise them up to conquer.
 - He told Abraham 400 years before that his descendents would conquer Palestine because of the idolatry there...
 - And He announced to Ahaz that He would raise up Assyria whom Ahaz was looking to for help to come and punish Israel and Judah for their idolatry...
 - And then He announced to Hezekiah that he would raise up Babylon to conquer Jerusalem because of its idolatry—an event that occurred over a century after...
 - And now we are going to see in this section of Isaiah’s prophecy that another conqueror from the east is to be raised up—Cyrus the Persian—who will deliver Israel from captivity.
 - In chapter 44, Isaiah will even name him before he is born.

TRANS> Who is it that raises up these conquerors from the east?

- It is the LORD who raises them upon the scene of history.
2. These He calls forth to carry out His righteous purpose in the earth...
- a. As verse 2 puts it,
 - “who in righteousness called him to His feet?”
 - to call to one’s feet means to call to do his bidding—to put into his service.
 - He sent them in order to accomplish a righteous purpose which purpose was clearly expressed in the prophecies—
 - to chasten His people that they might learn a lesson and be brought to repentance...
 - and to punish those who were not His people.
 - You will remember in Isaiah 10 how the LORD spoke of the Assyrian as the rod of His anger...
 - The nation was raised up by God as a rod in God’s hand to bring about His righteous purpose.
 - b. The passage goes on to ask...
 - “who gave the nations before him and made him rule over kings?
 - “who gave them as the dust to the sword, as driven stubble to his bow?

- “who pursued them and passed safely by the way that he had not gone with His feet?”
 - the idea is that the victory was easy for him—he did not even have to tread the ground to carry out his purposes.
- “who has performed it, calling the nations from the beginning.”
 - In other words, who is the one who has directed the affairs of all the nations from the very beginning?

3. The answer to these questions is obvious.

a. And it is given to us at the end of verse 4:

- Isaiah 41:4: ‘I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I am He.’”
 - It is the one who is the absolute I... the self-existing one!
 - He is the LORD of History who has the first and the last word!
 - All things are for Him and all things carry out His purposes!
- He is showing that He is LORD by declaring what He was going to do and then by doing exactly what He said.
 - None of the nations could deny that He is the One who did all this!

b. Know that on the day of judgement, His truth will be very convincing.

- Those who have taken refuge in lies will no longer be able to do so.
 - They will have to admit that He is Lord.
 - This will not be a forced confession, but they will be *persuaded* of the truth that they have tried to deny throughout all their days.
 - It will be a very humbling thing to stand before the LORD and have your folly exposed if you are one who has tried to deny Him as the LORD!

TRANS> But even before the trial, the nations all saw these things—they saw that the LORD was the one who controlled the movements of nations and who raised up conquerors.

- But what did the nations do when they saw it?
 - Did they turn to worship Him and seek His mercy?
 - No!

C. God charges them with turning to idols.

- The sequence of their actions is laid out in verse 5-7...
 1. They saw clearly that the LORD was in control
 2. Then they became afraid, which was not at all unreasonable.

- They were afraid of this great God who could told what He would do with this and that nation and then did it!
- How could they stand before such awesome power?

TRANS> So what did they do...

3. They came together and they encouraged each other...

- They said to each other, "Be of good courage!"
 - How foolish was that?
 - What basis was there to be of good courage?
- Yet, you see this all the time, don't you?
 - Someone will die who was not reconciled to God and comforters will come and say,
 - "Well now his suffering is over."
 - Sometimes they will even say,
 - "Now He is in a better place."
 - But what basis is there for such hope for one who was not reconciled to God?
 - None—Zero—
 - Such a person is not in a better place at all!
 - He is in a worse place and his suffering has only just begun.
- And we have those silly atheists who put posters on busses that say,
 - "The probably isn't a God, so go ahead and enjoy your life."
- How freely such vain encouragements flow from the lips of the ungodly...
 - How empty they are!
 - There is temporary comfort in these lies,
 - but they actually make the recipient worse off because now they feel better even though they are not reconciled to the LORD.

TRANS> And then they do something even more foolish to try to comfort each other...

4. They encourage each other to make idols!

- a. Here the true God who controls the nations has been revealed to them,
 - and instead of humbly bowing to Him,

- They start to make their own versions of Him.
 - They manufacture a god instead of submitting to the true God!
 - They try to make these idols as convincing as they can, but all they end up doing is taking refuge in a pack of lies!
- b. This is all so terribly foolish, but it is done all the time.
- 1) False religion is everywhere—
 - It is all about people trying to encourage themselves by making God to be what they want Him to be—what they are comfortable with.
 - They agree together that god must be like what they have imagined Him to be and this makes them feel better.
 - 2) And don't misunderstand either...
 - There are many in the covenant who do this very same thing...
 - Instead of submitting to God's revelation, they re-imagine Him to be what they want Him to be.
 - They say,
 - "I think God is..." and then they fill in the blank.

TRANS> But there is no true comfort in idols!

- Comfort comes from belonging to the true and living God—the LORD who rules in the heavens and does what He said He would do with the nations.
- My brothers and sisters, this is God's encouragement to you!

II. That the LORD has chosen you to bless you!

A. You are His elect servant.

- You belong to Him! You are His own possession!
 - In verse 8, He says:
 - Isaiah 41:8: But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.
1. My dear brothers and sisters, God tells you... you who are in Christ Jesus... that you are the Israel of God,
 - the true circumcision who put no confidence in the flesh, but believe on Jesus Christ.
 - You are not and idol worshipper—that is not your identity.
 - You belong to the true God!
 - He has chosen you and made you His servant.
 - You are not a servant of idols, but of the LORD.

2. What a wonderful thing this is!
- It is the result of His gracious work—His action of taking us.
 - Verse 9 says:
 - Isa 41:9: You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away:
 - When He says I have *taken you*, the word *take* makes “grasped hold of you” or “seized you”
 - It is His free grace!
 - You had a stony heart that would not respond to the true God—
 - A heart so stubborn that you would run away to idols rather than bow to Him.
 - But He took you, He seized you.
 - Jesus said, “All that the Father has given me will come to me.”
 - And also, “No one can come to me unless the Father draws Him.”
 - And, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”
 - This is what election is all about!
 - It is not given to us so that Calvinists can debate with Armenians.
 - It is given to us to comfort us that we truly do belong to God and because He Himself has come to us and taken us as His servants.
 - But how do we know if He has taken us?
 - We know because we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ by the working of His gracious power.
 - Again, Jesus’ words—
 - “All that the father has given me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will not cast out.”
 - God comes to the people He has chosen and His Holy Spirit breathes life into them so that they respond to His call.
 - Then they come to Him because He has called them and they cannot refuse.
 - They cannot go away to their idols because their eyes have been opened and they have seen their need and they have seen their gracious saviour and they have been renewed so that they want Him.
 - Do you see the contrast between verse 7 and verse 8?
 - *They* (the nations in v. 7) are idol worshippers,
 - “but *you Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen!*”

- You belong to Him forever because *He* has taken you to be His own.
- You did not choose Him, but He chose you.
- That is a real basis for comfort!
 - Having taken you, He is going to fulfil His promised purpose in you.
 - He who began a good work in you will complete it.

3. And look!

a. He refers to the father of our faith, Abraham, as His friend!

- Not only are we His servants, we are His friends!
- Galatians 3 tells us plainly that if we have faith in Jesus, we are heirs of the blessing that God promised to Abraham!
 - Through Jesus Christ, we are God's friends and His servants!

b. Do you have this assurance?

- There are so many believers who doubt their acceptance with God.
 - Do some of you doubt?
- But don't you see?
 - It is not about you and your good works and your deeds...
 - It is about His grace!
 - It is yours simply to turn to Him and believe!
 - It not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy that we are saved.
 - Come to Him and He will not cast you out.

B. Because you are His servant, He will take care of you!

1. You do not need to be afraid because He Himself is with you to save you.

a. All that divine power that controls the nations and that is such a fearful thing to the nations need not make *you* afraid!

- Because you are His servant...
 - All that power is exercised for you—to bless you!
- You can see this encouragement in verse 10:
 - Isa 41:10: Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

- A dismayed person is one who is looking all over the place for help and is at a loss to know what to do...
 - When you are like that, you turn to idols and false comfort—
 - You come up with foolish solutions to subdue your fears...
 - But why would you be dismayed when He is your God?
 - Avoiding God and denying the truth about Him are no real solutions!
 - Instead of being afraid, believe Him when He says:
 - “I am your God, I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
 - Of course He will if you will trust Him to do it!
 - Come to Him for life and quit dodging!
 - There is no need to dodge or to be dismayed before His awesome power.
 - Look to Him to become His servant and that power is unleashed for you!
- b. He assures you that He will do away with your enemies in time.
- He will do away with them once they have fulfilled His righteous purpose and you will see them no more.
 - That is what it says in verses 11-13.
 - Isa 41:11-13: "Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them—Those who contended with you. Those who war against you Shall be as nothing, As a nonexistent thing. For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’"
 - They will completely disappear, never to bother you again or even to be seen by you again.
 - The God who raised them and sent them against you to chasten you will remove them when He is finished with them.
 - The time will come when He will put His rod of correction away.
 - It is all because He is **your** God, He has chosen you to be His own.
2. But notice that His help is not only help from outside, but also grace that strengthens us in our weakness!
- a. Always in scripture, there are two kinds of help that we need from God.
- First, there is the help that comes in the form of God undertaking to do for us what we cannot do and never could do...
 - such as paying the penalty of our sins and crushing the head of Satan.

- And secondly, there is help that comes in the form God strengthening us to do what we must do (and could not have done without His grace).
 - such as enabling us to repent and believe, and then to walk in obedience and faith.
 - We cannot do this apart from His transforming grace,
 - but by His grace we can do it!
 - Jesus paid for our sins and He crushes Satan,
 - be He does not repent and believe for us or live the new life we are called to live.
 - He rather gives us grace to enable us to do these things.
- b. This is the encouragement that is so powerfully set forth in verses 14-16.
- 1) Here you have Jacob the helpless worm
 - and the Lord tells this worm not to be afraid because your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
 - And He is going to take that worm and change that worm so that that worm will be able to thresh mountains!
 - Remember the mountains in chapter 40 that have to be levelled?
 - The mountains of pride that stand in our way and keep us from serving God...
 - The mountains of rebellion and stubbornness?
 - 2) Well this helpless worm, because of the transforming redemptive grace of the Holy One of Israel,
 - is going to move mountains!
 - That little worm that breaks down the dirt to make soil is going to turn whole mountains into dust!
 - Dust so that they are scattered like chaff and blown away in the wind!
 - 3) My dear brothers and sisters, I know that when you look at the love that God has called you to have,
 - and you see how weak you are—that you feel like that lowly worm!
 - But God Almighty is in the business of taking helpless little worms and enabling them to destroy mountains!
 - Do not be afraid... Start working on the those mountains!

- The encouragement here is not that you are not a worm—you are a worm!
 - The encouragement is that the LORD will transform the worm into a threshing sledge with sharp teeth that moves mountains!
 - The promise is that (as it says at the end of verse 16)
 - “You shall rejoice in the LORD, and glory in the Holy One of Israel!”
 - You will glory in His grace that enabled you to move mountains out of your way so that you could serve God!
 - He is at work in you, both to will and do of His good pleasure!
3. But how is it, if all this is true, that we are so needy?
- Where is the power and grace?
- a. Why are we like a wilderness without water?
- 1) How often God’s people are in the wilderness...
 - There they were in bondage to Egypt...
 - And then there they were wandering in the wilderness...
 - And then there they were, oppressed by one nation after another in the time of the judges...
 - And then caught up in civil war even when David was king...
 - And then even worse in Rehoboam’s day when Israel and Judah were divided...
 - And then they were nearly devastated by Assyria...
 - And finally reduced to dust and rubble by Babylon!
 - 2) And even the apostle Paul, among the godliest of New Testament saints, is heard to cry out in anguish,
 - “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” as he continues to struggle with sin and the flesh!
 - There is hunger and there is thirst for us as God’s servants...
 - but you see, that is part of God’s work in us.
 - He brings us to see our desperate need in the wilderness so that we will come to Him for the water of life!
 - Isaiah spoke about the wells of salvation in chapter 12,
 - but no one will come to the well and drink from the well until he is made thirsty.
 - That is why God brought His people into exile—

- so that they would see their need and turn to Him for the living water that only He can give.
 - It was to prepare them for the coming of Jesus who gives the water of life—even the Holy Spirit.
- b. You see how the LORD tells us that He will leave us to thirst for a time...
- Isa 40:17: "The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, Their tongues fail for thirst.
 - It is a deliberate thing, a purposeful thing...
 - God is the one who raised up Assyria and He is the one who raises up Babylon against His people.
 - He is the one who years before brought them into the wilderness where there was no water.
 - In a way, our whole life in this world is that wilderness until we get to heaven where the river of life is found.
 - It can be rather frightening to know that He is the one who raised up Assyria and Babylon and who sent them against us...
 - He does not deny that He did this, but He keeps telling us not to be afraid but to trust Him even though He slays us.
 - As Job says in...
 - Job 13:15: Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
 - That is what you are repeatedly encouraged to do before the God who raised up powerful enemies to chasten you.
- c. The LORD promises that He will hear us in the wilderness!
- Look at the promise from the middle of verse 17. He says:
 - I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together,
 - This is the well of salvation for the thirsty soul!
 - Jesus gives the living water to those who ask for it!
 - Are any of you thirsty for life from God?
 - He will give it to you!
 - And this water comes from the most unexpected of places!
 - Rivers are opened up from the desolate heights!

- God makes rivers flow in the wilderness where you would not expect water to be found.
- What is this but a glorious picture of Jesus Christ!
 - Everyone thought that He would be exalted in this world and that river would flow from a throne like Solomons...
 - but instead the water of life flowed from his pierced side when He was crucified!
 - It was the true wilderness that He was brought to by our sins—desolate and barren!
 - Who would look at Christ hanging on the cross and say,
 - There is fruitfulness!
 - No one!
 - But the cross is where that fountain of life came forth!
 - It is the lamb that was slain who is worthy to open the scroll.
 - It is from His riven side that the water of life came forth for the nations...
 - And now we hear His call and promise:
 - John 7:37-39: On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
 - And indeed, Jesus did baptise with the Spirit as soon as He went into heaven and the sign of the new covenant is baptism with water...
 - The thirsty soul that looks to Him is satisfied in the wilderness!
 - But we will not be fully satisfied until we see Him in glory!
 - Until then, we must not despair, but keep looking to Him to provide, hanging on to His promise for life.

TRANS> You can be sure that...

C. The LORD will do what He has promised because His glory is bound to His promise.

1. If He did not do what He has promised for His people...

- If He does not bring them forth from Babylon at last and give them water in the wilderness,
 - then all that He has spoken about being LORD would not be true...
 - because He would have spoken of things to come and would not have done what He said!

2. He wants us to see that salvation is His work, by His grace, so that we will learn of Him and give Him due honour for our salvation...
 - So do not despair when it seems that He is not answering...
 - He will answer and you will glorify Him in that day.
 - Look at verse 20...
 - It tells you that He will do all that He has said...
 - Isaiah 41:20: That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it.
 - He refuses to be anonymous in our salvation because His desire is that we would know Him.
 - that we would learn of His grace as Saviour and glorify Him.

TRANS> And now having made His commitment so clear to us...

- He endeavours to fortify us to face our afflictions in this world with steadfast hope in God.
 - To fortify us against the temptation to turn to idols...

III. The Lord graciously shows us the futility of idols!

- He does this, not so much for the sake of the nations,
 - but for our sake—for His people—
 - who are tempted to doubt Him in the wilderness of this world.
 - And who are tempted to turn to idols for comfort—
 - to begin to modify what God has made known about Himself and to worship some likeness of Him that we are more comfortable with!

A. He calls upon these idols to demonstrate that they are divine!

1. In verse 21-23 it says:
 - Isa 41:21-23: "Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together."
2. This is a call for them to show that they have control of the future.
 - a. Think about it.
 - This is pretty important for god to be able to do, isn't it?

- If a god that you worship had no ability to control the future, what good is He?
 - If future belongs ultimately to someone else, then that god has no power or ability to help you when all is said and done.
 - He is, in fact, not god, but an impostor!
- b. Therefore the conclusion is that these gods are nothing...
- Isaiah does not mean that they were nothing at all...
 - They were a pack of lies.
 - They were a false source of comfort that men cling to all the way to Hell.
 - The Apostle Paul even says that those who worship idols sacrifice to demons—some of them may have some power...
 - But next to God, they are nothing—they can do nothing to alter what God has already purposed to do.
 - Verse 24 says: Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.
 - Those who choose them instead of the true God are an abomination to God.

B. And now the LORD declares that the future is with Him!

1. He has purposed to raise up one from the north and from the east where the sun rises...
 - And He has purposed that the raising up of this one will be good news for His people.
 - This great conqueror that He is raising up is named for us in chapter 44.
 - He is Cyrus, the one who will deliver Israel from Babylon.
- a. Look at the text, beginning with verse 25:
- Isa 41:25: "I have raised up one from the north, And he shall come; From the rising of the sun he shall call on My name; And he shall come against princes as though mortar, As the potter treads clay.
 - This speaks of his origin—from the north which is the direction invaders from the east came from when they came to Palestine...
 - and from the rising of the sun—because he was another one to originate from the east—even from Persia.
 - That he would call on God's name means that he will do what the LORD has appointed.

- That he would come against princes as though mortar and as the potter treads clay means that he will do what he wants with them.
 - They will be like putty in his hands, so to speak.
 - No one will be able to stop Him.

- b. The LORD, you see, is doing the very thing that He has challenged these worthless idols to do—
 - He is raising up the one He said He would raise up.
 - This is His way of proving to His people (again) that He is God.
 - No one else is able to do this, as He says in v. 26:
 - Isa 41:26: Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know? And former times, that we may say, 'He is righteous'? Surely there is no one who shows, Surely there is no one who declares, Surely there is no one who hears your words.
 - When the LORD first declared to Zion that he was raising up a deliverer for them—one who would be good news for Jerusalem...
 - You might have expected that someone from Babylon would have stepped forth to offer a counter prophecy if their gods were God...
 - But no one came...
 - This is what we are told in 41:27-28:
 - Isa 41:27-28: The first time I said to Zion, 'Look, there they are!' And I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings. For I looked, and there was no man; I looked among them, but there was no counselor, Who, when I asked of them, could answer a word.

- 2. So what does that tell us about these idol gods that have nothing to say when their nation is about to be destroyed?
 - Verse 29 declares it:
 - Isa 41:29 Indeed they are all worthless; Their works are nothing; Their molded images are wind and confusion.
 - The future is with the LORD and you will do well to remember that in the very time when it seems that the LORD has failed in His purposes.

So then, what is the conclusion of all this?

The conclusion is that it is yours to rejoice and trust in the LORD who has chosen you to be His servant instead of an idol worshipper!

- Covenant people of God, don't go trying to change the eternal God!
 - You cannot change Him—you only produce idols when you try!
 - Instead of trying to change Him, trust Him and worship Him!

- He will surely bring His blessing to you if you will wait upon him!
- I want to plead with some of you who are not sure of Him!
 - Perhaps some of you children who are growing up in the church—
 - Do you believe in the LORD who is revealed to you in His Word?
 - Do you believe in His promise to bless you and to do you good?
 - Are you sure of His salvation, or do you doubt Him?
 - And if you doubt Him...
 - If you doubt that He has purpose to bless you—to bless those who trust in Him—
 - then what is your reason for such doubt?
 - The LORD is the One who declares what He will do and then does it!
 - Don't try to find comfort in changing Him or in trying to deny Him.
 - He does reject any that come to Him.
 - I know you struggle with a sinful heart...
 - but come to Him and He will save you.
 - You don't need to stand off.
 - You don't need to be afraid.
 - If you are thirsty for Him and His righteousness, come to Him and you will be filled!