

Isaiah 49:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

Analysis

But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. God's answer emphatically reverses the impossibility posed in verse 24. The opening "But thus saith the LORD" introduces divine contradiction of human logic. The terms "mighty" (gibbor) and "terrible" ('arits, עָרִיץ, ruthless tyrant) acknowledge Babylon's formidable power, yet God promises to overcome even this.

The dual promise—"captives shall be taken away" and "prey shall be delivered"—uses passive voice to emphasize divine action, not human achievement. The theological center appears in "I will contend" (anoki arib, אֲנֹכִי אֶרִיב), depicting God as legal advocate and warrior champion. God fights Israel's battles; their deliverance depends on His intervention. The concluding "I will save thy children" places covenant relationship at the center—God acts for His people because they are His.

From a Reformed perspective, this models effectual calling and irresistible grace. Those whom God purposes to save will be saved; no power can prevent it (Romans 8:31-39). Christ is the ultimate champion who contends with Satan, sin, and death on behalf of His people. The atonement satisfies divine justice while delivering

those lawfully captive to sin. This verse grounds assurance in God's power and promise, not human worthiness or effort.

Historical Context

This promise found initial fulfillment in Cyrus's decree (538 BCE) releasing Jewish captives despite Babylon's previous might. Isaiah 44:28-45:4 specifically names Cyrus as God's instrument, demonstrating sovereign control even over pagan rulers. Babylon fell to Persia in one night (Daniel 5), and Cyrus immediately authorized Jewish return—a stunning reversal.

The phrase "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee" echoes God's covenant promise to Abraham: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12:3). Throughout history, nations that oppressed Israel ultimately fell: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome. Yet ultimate fulfillment comes through Christ who "spoiled principalities and powers" (Colossians 2:15), delivering captives from sin's tyranny. Church history shows persecution ultimately failing to destroy God's people—the "terrible" cannot prevent God's saving purposes.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does knowing God fights your battles change your approach to spiritual warfare?
2. What captivities in your life need God's delivering power?
3. How does Christ's role as your champion/advocate affect your confidence in salvation?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	גַּם	שָׁבַי	גִּבּוֹר
H3588	H3541	But thus saith	the LORD	H1571	Even the captives	of the mighty
		H559	H3068		H7628	H1368
יִקָּח	וּמֶלֶק	עַר יֵץ	וּמֶלֶךְ	יִמָּלֵט	וְאֵת	
shall be taken away	and the prey	of the terrible	shall be delivered			H854
H3947	H4455	H6184	H4422			
וְרִיבִי	אֲנִי	אֲרִיב	וְאֵת	בְּנֵי יִרְ	אֲנִי	
with him that contendeth		for I will contend		thy children		
H3401	H595	H7378	H853	H1121	H595	
אֶשִׁיעַ:						
with thee and I will save						
H3467						

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 35:4 (Salvation): Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

Isaiah 54:13 (References Lord): And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Zechariah 14:12 (References Lord): And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

Isaiah 14:2 (References Lord): And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Isaiah 10:27 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

Genesis 12:3 (Parallel theme): And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

1 John 3:8 (Parallel theme): He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Isaiah 25:9 (Salvation): And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Jeremiah 29:10 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Zechariah 9:11 (Parallel theme): As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.