

In our passage for today we have two verses that are frequently misused. We also have several theological concepts that are hotly debated. But the main point that God is conveying to us is often overlooked. We can have peace in whatever situations we face because we know that God is all-wise, loving, and just. The Apostle Paul's description of everything working together for good for those who love God (Romans 8:28) comes from the Old Testament concept we find in our verses for today.

¹ Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: Isaiah 45:1 God introduced the name of this future leader who would liberate the Jews from Babylonian captivity in the previous verse. Cyrus is God's anointed and God takes hold of his right hand to defeat physical kings. God does the same with us. He anoints us (2 Corinthians 1:21), holds our right hand (Isaiah 41:13), and opens doors for us (Revelation 3:8).

The difference is Cyrus was a secular leader used by God to do God's sovereign will with the physical powers of this world. For believers, we come to Christ in repentance, are born again, and join Him in His work. He anoints us spiritually, takes hold of our hand to comfort, encourage, and direct us. He opens doors for us to minister to others (Ephesians 3:10). We fight a spiritual battle and advance an eternal, spiritual kingdom.

² "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, Isaiah 45:2 The Lord was going to go before Cyrus, preparing the way for his conquests. We can imagine the nations he was going to conquer having their own internal difficulties and strife that prepared the way for Cyrus armies to conquer them more easily.

Once again we see a spiritual parallel with our battle. Isaiah predicted that God would make the mountains low and fill the valleys for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:4). Jesus told us the gates of hell would not be able to withstand the spiritual assault of believers (Matthew 16:18). The strongholds of Satan are broken because the Lord goes before us (Isaiah 52:12).

Drug addiction, lust, pride, co-dependence, whatever the sin, we don't have the power to break free, but Jesus goes before us when we look to Him. He busts the gates of hell down and sets the prisoners free. We get to cooperate in that by sharing the love of Jesus with others and telling them what great things He has done for us. They have to realize they are enslaved before they will listen to us, but when they do, Jesus is the One who sets them free. He goes before us and prepares hearts. Watch for those hearts that are ready to hear and know they have a need.

Commented [PW1]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [PW2]: 2 Corinthians 1:21 (ESV)

²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 41:13 (ESV)

¹³ For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

Commented [PW4]: Revelation 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Commented [PW5]: Ephesians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 40:4 (ESV)

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Commented [PW7]: Matthew 16:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Commented [PW8]: Isaiah 52:12 (ESV)

¹² For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

³ I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. Isaiah 45:3

For Cyrus these were physical treasures hidden in palaces and secret storehouses. Archeologists still come upon some forgotten stash now and then. God did this for Cyrus so that he would know God was the true God. Historically, he was a king who honored all gods of all the different lands. We don't know what happened when he was shown this prophecy, but it had to have a profound impact on him. It was huge leap of faith in that day to accept that there was only one God, Creator (2 Chronicles 32:15).

Believer, there is something for you here too. He calls us by name too, just as He called the Jews by name (Isaiah 43:1). Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). There are secret treasures for us beyond our ability to imagine. As you go through life serving the Lord, He is laying up those treasures for you as your reward for serving Him (Matthew 6:20). Jesus tells us those treasures can't rust or be stolen.

⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. Isaiah 45:4 He called Cyrus by name for the sake of Israel. Here is a spiritual truth. God will use the physical realm to advance the kingdom of God. He can cause the secular to bless the spiritual. Sometimes it comes through favors or tax exemption, and other times it comes through persecution. When the early church delayed going into the world to proclaim the gospel, Jewish persecution caused them to obey (Acts 8:1). Whether we need the blessing of government or its persecution depends on our situation. In different parts of the world today both are taking place.

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, Isaiah 45:5 This was the witness to Cyrus. There is only one God! He equipped Cyrus to conquer the world though Cyrus didn't know Him. One God is our claim today as well. The world is still trying to push the philosophy that all roads lead to God. God loved Cyrus enough to demonstrate to Him that was not true. Jesus was the ultimate demonstration to the world the truth of God's claim in this verse. He declared, "No man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

The great difference between false religions and Christianity is works versus grace. Christians don't place faith in man's ability to pay for their own sin, to do more good than evil, or to do enough good to earn God's favor. We don't even believe in learning the right doctrines to attain grace, as important as that is. Our hope is solely placed in what Jesus did for us. It is trust in God to save us as demonstrated in both the Old and New Testaments.

⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. Isaiah 45:6 God wanted Cyrus to know so that the world would know. He was the ruler of a world empire. His

Commented [PW9]: 2 Chronicles 32:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!"

Commented [PW10]:

Commented [PW11]: Isaiah 43:1 (ESV)

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Commented [PW12]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Commented [PW13]: Matthew 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Commented [PW14]: Acts 8:1 (ESV)

¹ And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Commented [PW15]: John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

testimony could reach the world if he was willing to testify to it. This prophecy is a testimony to the world today. When people read about the prophecy fulfilled in history it should convince them of the truth of one God Creator. That is why so many want to believe Isaiah 40 - 66 was written after the return of the Jews, in spite of the contrary evidence. YHWH is God and there is no other!

This repeated theme of prophecy belonging to God alone in Isaiah would just be a flat out lie to the first readers who would have known better if this was written after the fact. Someone could say they discovered an ancient book, when in actuality they forged it. But think about why they would have wanted to do it in that day. The theme of Isaiah is salvation through a coming Messiah and the glory of the Messianic age. Would an author try to bring a spiritual message that declared idols were a lie and that the Messiah would not speak deceit while his whole book was a deceptive lie? Sure, it is possible, but does that make any sense?

The same argument is true for the Gospel of John. Because John's message is as powerful as Isaiah's and clearly says Jesus is the way to God, critics say John made up the stories. But it is John's Gospel that declares Satan to be the father of lies (John 8:44). Would the author who penned those words then make up stories that were a lie? Again, it is possible, but both these books have been an inspiration through the ages, encouraging life transformation and hope. The issue some take with these books is the declaration of only one God and one way to Him.

7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things. Isaiah 45:7 The first recorded words of God had to do with the forming of light (Genesis 1:3). The Hebrew word for forming is the word used earlier in Isaiah for the potter shaping his clay. Physicists could have fun with these differing Hebrew verbs "forming," "creating," and "making."

Before the light there were the heavens and the earth, but no light (Genesis 1:1). That absence of light is darkness. To create space before photons is to make darkness possible. There are theological implications and analogies in the use of these verbs in the physical realm (John 3:19-21).

The second part of the verse has two possible translations, one of which has caused some confusion. **The word for calamity can also be translated "evil." The Hebrew word is used for both moral evil and calamity.** KJV translates it evil. Bible critics will ask why God created evil, and draw from it that all evil comes from God. The proper translation is calamity as we can see demonstrated in the many Biblical accounts. **James 1:13-14** tell us God can't be tempted by evil and tempts no one. Temptation to evil comes from the misguided desire of the human heart.

Let us dwell on the issue of calamity for a moment. Death, disastrous storms, and plagues, are forms of calamity. Is death from God? Yes! He brought death as a

Commented [PW16]: John 8:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Commented [PW17]: Genesis 1:3 (ESV)

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Commented [PW18]: Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Commented [PW19]: John 3:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Commented [PW20]: James 1:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

punishment for sin (Genesis 3:17). Otherwise we would live forever in this fallen world with no fear of the Day of Judgment. That was part of the problem of longevity in the pre-flood world. God may also be sparing those who die young from something that would have been even more detrimental to their eternal state.

Job endured the worst kind of calamity, but his children were in heaven and he ended up with a deeper relationship with God. If calamity turns us to God, it is a blessing, not a curse. The same calamity that brings judgment to one can bring salvation to another. Calamity for Babylon meant the deliverance for the Jews. My son got a better position where he works, but was concerned for his friend who applied for the same job. To which of them was it a blessing and to which one was it calamity? Only time will tell. They both may be in the process of being blessed. When viewing what we perceive to be calamity we should keep in mind God's attributes and His desire for our eternal good.

⁸ "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it. Isaiah 45:8 The commentator Oswalt wrote of this verse: "Just as the sky that God has created cannot help but pour forth rain, and the earth that God has created cannot help but bring forth plants, so God the Creator can only pour out on his people right dealing and mighty deliverance in all his relations with them" (Oswalt, Isaiah 40-66, p 206).

Righteousness is right dealing in every aspect. That is not always what we desire. Of course God's righteousness includes His grace and mercy. The more we conform to His attributes, the more we act in that perfect balance of justice and mercy, as well as equity and grace. That brings forth the fruit of righteous living just as the rain brings fruit on the earth. The fruit of righteousness is called a peaceable fruit that comes from being disciplined in Hebrews 12:11 and James 3:18. This kind of fruit comes through Jesus Christ according to Philippians 1:11.

⁹ "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"¹⁰ Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" Isaiah 45:9-10 Things are not always as they appear. I have talked with the caretakers of the disabled and heard about the amazing spiritual lessons they learn from them. Their simple relationship with God is a lesson for us all. And haven't you ever wondered about the nearly perpetual smile on some of those with Down's Syndrome?

I've told you my story of how God stopped my questions when my grandson was born with a cleft lip and palate. The Spirit of God directed me to Exodus 4:11 where I read, "Who made man's mouth?" Certainly we should study and try to understand all that we can. But we must also recognize that God wants us to trust Him in things we can't

Commented [PW21]: Genesis 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Commented [PW22]: Hebrews 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Commented [PW23]: James 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Commented [PW24]: Philippians 1:11 (ESV)

¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Commented [PW25]: Exodus 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

understand. That was the message to Job. What do we know of the deeper things of God? We must trust in His attributes and accept by faith that all things work together for good to those who love Him.

11 Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?" Isaiah 45:11 This is another verse in which the KJV translation has caused some confusion. The context is clearly about trusting God's work in the world even when we don't understand. The Creator has a better plan than we can imagine, even when we don't understand. Perhaps it is better to say especially when we don't understand. The second half of this verse in KJV is, "Concerning the work of my hands, command thou me!" For years I went around commanding God to do what I thought best. The verse is saying just the opposite. God is in heaven. We are created beings of earth. If we could command God, the results would be chaos. God is saying that we are invited to ask Him about the future, our direction, His will for us, and the good plans He has for us. But we shouldn't be so arrogant to think we know what God should do for us or the world.

12 I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. Isaiah 45:12 The Creator is the one who gives the commands to the billions of galaxies, each with their billions of stars. Now that we know so much more about the universe, this statement should have an even greater impact. There are a hundred billion galaxies each with around a hundred billion stars, and God directs and orders each and every one. That is probably how many factors there are in any given situation we experience. That should humble us, like our size in the universe should humble us. How arrogant is it to tell God what to do?

13 I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the LORD of hosts. Isaiah 45:13 What's this all about? It's about God deciding when and how to bring the Jews back to the Promised Land and bring the conditions that were ripe for the Messiah. If He chose to use a heathen king to do so, then that was as it should be. He could cause that king to send the Jews back to Jerusalem of His own desire. Not only was he not paid to do it, but he financed it!

Today we can look at the latest miraculous return of the Jews to Jerusalem and its rebuilding after an even longer exile which came about because of their rejection of the Messiah. **Just as the predicted return and rebuilding we are reading about was preparation for the first coming, so this second return is preparing for the Second Coming.** There are eternal things that far outweigh the trials of this life. Are you trusting your Creator? Isn't that the most reasonable thing to do?

Questions

- 1 How are we like Cyrus?
- 2 Why are our treasures better?
- 3 What was the message to Cyrus?
- 4 Why does the world struggle with it?
- 5 Why does the world try to reject the authenticity Isaiah and John?
- 6 Why is their argument unreasonable?
- 7 How is verse 7 mistranslated?
- 8 Why would God create calamity?
- 9 When do we need to just trust?
- 10 How is verse 11 misinterpreted?
- 11 What is God teaching us in this passage?