

Isaiah 44:24 to 45:8

24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I *am* the LORD, who makes all *things*, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;

25 Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness;

26 Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places;

27 Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers';

28 Who says of Cyrus, '*He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."*

Isaiah 45:1-8 (NKJV)

1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:

2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.

3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call *you* by your name, *Am* the God of Israel.

4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.

5 I *am* the LORD, and *there is no other*; *There is no God besides Me*. I will gird you, though you have not known Me,

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That *there is none besides Me*. I *am* the LORD, and *there is no other*;

7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*.'

8 "Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it.

Our text this morning is part of a larger text. It goes from Chapter 44 vs 24 to Chapter 45 vs 8.

Here is brother Ortland's outline we will use.

44:24 – 45:8 God accepts final responsibility for everything that happens

45:9-13 God warns us not to take offense at all

45:14-25 God calls us to embrace him as God

So this morning we are looking at the text where God accepts final responsibility for everything that happens.

Have you ever watched a movie where two people are in a relationship and one of the people in the relationship begins to pick up clues that the other is doing something that will destroy the relationship. But the person does not want to make it an issue because they don't want to lose what they have, even though they know it is bogus?

Well a lot of people do that with God.

Are you ever afraid that you are wrong about believing in God? Do you have questions that you are afraid to ask because you are afraid the answer will undo your faith? Maybe you don't want to give up your faith because it is what you built your life around. But in the back of your mind you might have misgivings.

What we are going to see this morning is a God that is bigger than all your doubts. We are going to see a God you can bank upon and can trust and you will find Him wholly true. There are no legitimate questions that do not have an answer.

We are going to see a God that is beyond us. This is not a man made concocted religion portrayed in a way we can understand God, we can predict God, we can figure out His every move because it is what **we would do**. No we are going to see a God that confounds men. We will see a God that is beyond mankind.

²⁴ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;

Have you ever considered how unbelievable what we believe sounds? Look at this verse. We believe we have a God, a God that chose to reveal Himself through 10's of authors over thousands of years of history. And this God formed everything that is made. It is all His creation. It is all His to do with what he wants.

Now on top of that, He identifies Himself **first** here as the people's redeemer. He has bought this people back to Himself. He describes himself in a loving relationship to His creation. And look at the attention to detail. He does not say that He created these systems and they will play out how they play out. I am sure He could have made it that way, but He did not. He says He actively determined what each of these humans He is talking to **will be**. He is actively

and intimately involved in the details. And He does not describe it by saying, I made human beings. No He makes it intensely personal. He says I made you. Do you ever bemoan your weaknesses, the built in parts of your psychology or physiology that lead to your most consistent failures? Your predispositions that you did nothing to create? Do you realize that the logical implication here is that **they are intentional**. Unless God makes mistakes, we must figure God created both those things about us that **appear useful to others** and those parts about us that are **pre-disposed to failure**. It is all serving a purpose that was divinely intended and planned. How about the sin that so easily besets us? We were probably born with that bent. Now I do not intend to in any way say that means we must sin. But I am saying that it was part of God's intention in our design that we must struggle with sin. This fact that we must struggle does not prove that we are not doing something right. It only proves that we are breathing. Don't be discouraged that you struggle with sin. That doesn't prove you are failing. It only proves you are in the faith.

The victorious Christian life is not **arriving** at the point **where you are no longer tempted**. It is **maintaining the point** where you **obey when you feel like disobeying**.

The implications of what Isaiah is saying here are staggering. God made us and he made us the way we are. Now we may have embellished the bad at points by how we have thought and lived. And we may have trained our bodies and minds to do some good things in God's sanctification process. But under all of that we were designed for His purpose.

Now this verse **I am the LORD, who makes all things**

Goes along with verse 7 of the next chapter. **I, the LORD, do all these things.'**

From what I understand these are actually the same sentence but it is interpreted differently due to the context. God makes it all. God does it all. And God sees no need to try to defend His actions. We want to get God off the hook. We want to say his hands are tied due to our free choice. But God makes no such claim. Here is how **God** defines His sovereignty. He makes it all. He does it all.

I don't know why but I find it much easier to believe that God made the earth and the galaxy and the plants and animals. I find it much more mind blowing that He took the time to create us individually. But that is what this is saying. Again, since this is true, how does this affect our decisions? You know that struggle you have? It isn't a cosmic mistake. It is the one you are supposed to deal with. God knew it would be yours from the beginning of time. We need to face our lives with this certainty. We are in God's plan. And He knows what He is doing.

Now all this creation Isaiah describes does God's people **a great deal of good** and gives us **great confidence** in our God. But what does it do to those outside of God's fold?

25 Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness;

The babbler is the false teacher that speaks whatever enters his imagination. The diviners use various methods to discover the truth. But the third appears to be the worst. This is the person who relies upon his own thinking to determine what will happen. What all three of these have in common is that they are trying to tell the future. Now, with all our knowledge, would you not think by now we could predict the future? But we can't. Even the election of our politicians is proof of that. Very few would have guessed that President Trump would win the election. No matter what the source, whether it is mystical imaginations, magical conjuring or human wisdom, God gets a kick out of making sure that people look foolish when they try to predict the future. That is God's realm.

So when Stephen Hawking predicts that the end of the world will happen in less than 600 years by overpopulation and global warming, don't sweat it. His predictions and all those who believe him are subject to frustration, madness, and the realization of their own foolishness. The future is God's.

26 Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places;

27 Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers';

Now, we saw what will happen to all the prophecies that originated outside of God. What about those people who report **what God says**? Well of course they are spot on. Just like the words of Isaiah, God's servant. Read Isaiah 53 and you can see just how specific God is when God predicts the future. There is very little that is generalized. We are given details on the suffering servant that could not be known apart from God.

Now in this text we find that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. This may be the first specific notice of such a thing to the Israelites. Now what is the likelihood such a thing will happen? How often are people removed from their homeland only to return? It does not happen often. It is **unlikely** according to reason. But it is **certain** according to God's word.

Now, up to this point we have seen things that we might expect. But look what comes next.

28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." '

Isaiah 45:1-8 (NKJV)

1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:

Now wait a minute. First, who is Cyrus? This prophecy was made somewhere around at least 130 years before Cyrus was even born. So one could say he was a **nobody**. At least he **had no body**.

So this child will be born and named by his parents. And they will have no idea they are fulfilling prophesy. But it will happen because God has charted it out.

Then look what he is called. **Cyrus is My shepherd**. Wow. That is king language. Cyrus is going to lead his people like a shepherd leading a bunch of sheep.

He will perform all my pleasure. Notice earlier we were told of Jerusalem being rebuilt by God. Now we are shown the tool. Cyrus. Cyrus is not the architect. He will probably think he is. He will probably take credit for it. But it is not true. His political position, chosen for his own political reasons, will be to command that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the temple should be rebuilt.

His anointed. This is Messianic language. Here is Cyrus the deliverer. Now keep in mind, this guy is an idolater. He would fit into our culture very well. He catered to all religions. He's like a friend of ours in YFC that would cross himself. Then he would smile and say, in case we are wrong. Cyrus helped everyone serve the gods of their choosing so he could have god on his side, whoever that god might be. Cyrus, God's anointed? Cyrus whose right hand I have held. What is this? This is a heathen king. Yet God is guiding him. God is providing him success. God is empowering him.

Brother Ortland captures what is happening here very well.

If God is sovereign, then all of history, not just church history, is his plan. All events have one ultimate cause, fit into one great purpose, and find their significance in one final victory. That means we can't box God in. It means we can't think piecemeal. It means making room for the improbable ways of God.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word - Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

I grew up thinking there was a battle between God and Satan and the ebb and flow was caused by how well people determined to obey God or disobey Him.

After all it wasn't God's fault if the bad guys were winning. Someone probably didn't do their job. Not enough Christians got out to vote. People didn't give the money they should have. Someone didn't determine to live in the perfect will of God. I had no idea then that I was giving **us** way too much credit. Our successes and failures matter, but they have no bearing on God doing what God has planned to do. And praise God for that.

God is sovereign over everything. He is sovereign over the decision made that placed me under a new boss. He is sovereign over the unfavorable rulings against Christians. He is sovereign over the **destroyers**. He is sovereign over the **rescuers**. He does not require a person's sworn allegiance to use them as his tool, his messenger, his deliverer. God laughs at the limitation of human decisions. It does not limit Him at all. When God wants someone to think a certain way, they will. When He wants them to do a certain thing, they will. And God makes no effort to apologize if some of the things He does offend us. Who are we to criticize Him?

Remember when our brother from Russia told us how God had used Stalin and Lennon to prepare a platform for the spread of Gospel across the nation? That is not what they had in mind, but that is what God had in mind. They laid train tracks, centralized the territory to one language, and put a radio in everyone's house. Were they servants of the Lord? Not willingly. Not intentionally. But they were none the less.

We witness lots of awful things happen in our world. And they are awful. We do not need to redefine reality. We see consequences of sin everywhere. And they are awful. This is not to say that **it is not** awful. But it is not out of control. There is a purpose. There is an end game. And everything is fitting into that. It does not look like it. It certainly does not feel like it. But it is none the less.

We do not know the answers to our **little questions** that are vitally important to us. We ask why did I lose a loved one? Why did I lose my job when I needed it most? Why was I rejected by someone I loved? And on and on. Those are big questions to us. And God is often kind to us in the process. We might not be given the answers to those questions that we feel are so pressing. But we already know the answer to the **crucial** questions. God has graciously filled us in on the structure of our existence. God is actively involved in seeing that every single thing that happens will be used to usher His people into eternity in a victorious manner. Nothing is meaningless. All things are working out for the good of every believer. God is actively seeing to it. Now how do some of the things **that we experience as tragedies** work out in that tapestry. Frankly we often have no idea. But they do.

We need to keep in mind here, God does not just say this thing He predicts **will happen**. He is not just predicting the future as it will play out. There is nothing at all **passive** about what Isaiah says. He says **I am doing this**. I am making this happen exactly as it happens. I am not **adjusting to it**. I am not **permitting** it. I am **causing** it. I am seeing to it that this happens.

What box does that fit in? Maybe our view of God really is too small, like JB Phillips said in his book.

² 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.

³ I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call *you* by your name, Am the God of Israel.

There is not a news reporter in the world who would report the news like this. There is no one who would have this kind of insight unless God revealed it. Can you imagine how the Jewish people would have responded while living in Babylon when they heard about the rise of Cyrus a few generations later? What an impression that would have made. These people would have known exactly what was coming. They knew WHO God was going to use to rescue them. They just didn't know when.

The news reporters would report what **Cyrus** was doing. We have the advantage of knowing what **God** is doing. It is God who is paving the way for this military venture. We are talking brutal battles. There is nothing casual about this process. God is paving a political turnover. And God is saying that Cyrus is going to get all the goodies of Babylon. Babylon made some blunders that God is not going to overlook. God does not need to allow disrespect to His name. Belshazzar should not have presumed to drink out of God's cups. So God replaced him.

⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.

We have seen this over and over and over. Everything on this planet is happening **first for God's glory**. But coupled into this, everything is happening **for the sake of God's children**. How. We don't know. How did Hitler and Nero and Stalin and on and on benefit the people of God. How was that for the people of God's sake? We don't always know. But we can know that we are the key players. Everything revolves around the children of God. And it is not because **we are so precious**. It is because **God is so worthy**.

Look here. God named Cyrus. This would have to have 2 implications. First God chose the name Cyrus for Cyrus. And second he predicted that is the name of the man who would arrive to set the Israelites free from Babylon.

And look. It says you have not known me. God is not giving Cyrus divine guidance as Cyrus depends upon God. No. God is just making it happen regardless of Cyrus's intentions.

We really need to get this. God has no limitations in accomplishing His will. Again, logically, I do not see how we can interfere with God's plan. We can make it miserable for ourselves. We can accept unnecessary hardships. Or we can make use of every opportunity for obedience so we have more gifts to give our Lord when we see Him. But we cannot mess up His plan.

⁵ I am the LORD, and *there is no other*; *There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me,*

⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That *there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and *there is no other*;*

Here it is again. God is God. There is no one in His category. There are only false gods. There is no other true God.

And this one true God is going to **do what He does** to get Cyrus in charge of His people. And from then on into eternity it will be known that Isaiah said this would happen 160 years before it did. No one can miss that point that this is **what God did**. He was in charge of the whole career of probably the most powerful person alive at the time. And it turns out Cyrus really wasn't powerful at all. God was.

How do you argue with a 160 year old scroll that says exactly what will happen? God is doing this to gain glory. God is doing this to reveal Himself as the one true God.

⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*.'

⁸ "Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it.

I would rather this said that God does all kinds of nice things but does not take credit for the bad stuff, the painful stuff. That stuff just happens. But that is not what it says.

God deals with light and the absence of light. He makes peace and the lack of peace. We need to be careful with our theology. We need to allow it **to give credit to God for what God takes credit for**. World events are accomplishing Gods will in ways that we don't understand. But not a single molecule is out of control. It is all designed to produce a people perfectly fit for eternity with God.

The end goal is the revival of God's people. There will be righteousness and salvation. And that is what the Lord created. The Lord does all these things.

Some talk about Christ as if He were a victim. But even **that** horrible event was orchestrated by God. God had the Roman leaders and Jewish leaders play the part that needed played. They all displayed their own wickedness and are responsible for their actions. But we cannot miss the fact that even **human wickedness** was orchestrated perfectly for **the salvation** of God's people. Are you unsure about your faith in God? This is a God you can investigate. This is a God that does not fear what any expert might say. He turns human wisdom on its head. Human wisdom will one day be seen as one huge laughing stock. Because **God is God** and He **does** all things and **makes** all things. Does this inspire confidence in you? Do you trust that your God can handle any eventuality? Even our sins and our mistakes serve a useful purpose. When we sit in the regret of our decisions, the ways our foolishness hurt others, God is using that. When we seem to be at the whims of the powers around us, God is using that. When we lose things that are valuable to us and we are mourning the loss, God is using that. Nothing slipped past God's notice. Nothing was forced on God by what some human decided. God is never reacting. God is always acting. And He tells us He is acting **for our good**. What have I to dread? What have I to fear? Leaning on the everlasting arms I have blessed peace with my Lord so near. Leaning on the everlasting arms.