

THE EVIL WHICH GOD CREATES.

"I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil." – Isa. 45:7.

In view of the blasphemous explanation now being given by some, of this passage of Scripture, we are reminded that this is but a fulfilment of the divine forewarnings through the apostles and prophets. In this connection we notice that Paul says, "Perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1); and then he describes at great length the class of men from whom we are to expect the perils. And that we might at once recognize them so as to have nothing whatever to do with them, he adds, those "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:5.) The importance of this admonition will be seen when it is understood that Jesus' death is made the power or source of godliness to them that believe. In harmony with this view Paul says, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...by which also ye are saved...unless ye have **[R1350 : page 11]** believed in vain...*how* that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-3.) For "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20), "Redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Pet. 1:18,19.) In this way Jesus, by the sacrifice of his life as a human being, obtained the right to mankind, having bought them from Justice with the price. This he did in order that God could maintain his Justice and at the same time receive all sinners who would come to him through their appointed substitute; for "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6.) Therefore those who come through Jesus are "justified freely by his [God's] grace [favor] through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,... through his blood." (Rom. 3:24-26.) The sinner thus justified is reckoned holy or godly, having secured "the gift of [attributed] righteousness. ...For as by one man's disobedience

many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:17,19.) Therefore Jesus' death is made the power or source of godliness. (1 Cor. 1:23,24.) Then to deny in any manner, either by word or implication, that Jesus gave up his life (died) as the price of our redemption is to deny the power of godliness. This, Paul said some would do, while they would maintain the outward appearance of being godly.

It is Peter, however, who describes more particularly the peculiarly subtle method they would adopt in thus denying the ransom. He says, "There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privately bring in damnable [destructive] heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." (2 Pet. 2:1.) He thus positively asserts that there would be teachers of falsehood right in the midst of God's people. Evidently, then, they would be formally godly – "grievous wolves" in sheep's clothing. These he says would deny that the Lord bought them. Not that they would do so openly, by word of mouth, but that they would do so in a private manner. That is, while they might profess to believe in the ransom, they would quietly introduce some false theories that would be opposed to it, or, in other words, a virtual denial that the Lord bought them.

These inspired forewarnings we now see were not in vain; for the false teachers are now here, and are doing exactly as foretold. This is fully exemplified, in that the words of our text are now being used as authority for charging God with being the author of sin and wickedness. This theory, while blasphemous in itself and opposed to both reason and Scripture, is in addition, as we shall see, a denial of the ransom. Now, if God be responsible for the introduction and continued existence of sin, then the commission of sin is excusable, and then Adam and his posterity would undoubtedly be irresponsible, having had no choice in the matter.

Further, under such circumstances God could not have commanded the man to obey a given law. Not being in any way, then, amenable to law, he could not possibly be a transgressor of law, and therefore he could not have committed an offence against justice. As a sequence, there would be no necessity for Jesus as the Redeemer, and of his death as the price. For unoffended justice could not require satisfaction, *i.e.*, a ransom or corresponding price. In this way, this subtle and God-dishonoring theory denies the Lord that bought us. In addition to this, by getting rid of the penalty (for where there could be no transgression there could be no penalty inflicted), it holds out a false hope that all must eventually be saved.

The whole theory is decidedly unreasonable, and is opposed in every particular by the testimony of God's Word; and further, there is not a particle of authority for it in our text. That the evil here referred to by the prophet is not sin, but calamity, is shown by the context and the contrast drawn between peace and evil. The chapter opens with the statement that Cyrus is the Lord's anointed to subdue nations. Then, continuing, God promises him (verse 2) "I will go before thee" (verse 3) "I will give thee the treasures of darkness... that thou mayest know that I the Lord... am the God of Israel." (Verse 5) "I am the Lord and there is none else; there is no God beside me: I girded thee." (Verse 6) "That they may know...that there is none beside me." (Verse 7) "I form the light and create [R1350 : page 12] darkness; I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." The subject of the prophet is thus evidently continued, inclusive of the seventh verse, and here the word "*create*" is used twice, and undoubtedly in the same sense. For as darkness may [R1351 : page 12] be said to be *created* by the withdrawing of light, so also the evil referred to may be said to be *created* by the withdrawal of the restraint and protection that afford peace. Now, however, God was about to withdraw these and inflict chastisement. To this end Cyrus was exalted to power, as stated, that he might know that Jehovah was

the God of Israel, for the sake of the Jewish captives then in Babylon, and also that the idolatrous nations might know, by the calamities (evils) inflicted on them, and the overthrow of their man-made gods (to whom they would vainly appeal for deliverance), that there was no God beside the God of Israel.

[Rather, we would suggest, Israel had already experienced adversity and captivity to Babylon (*evils*) as the result of the withdrawal of the Lord's protecting care, because of their idolatry; and now that God's time had come for their return to his protection and favor in their own land, he would have Cyrus know that his accession to power was not accidental, but of divine arrangement, for the purpose of returning the Israelites to their own land. God would have Cyrus recognize him as the supervisor of his people's affairs. – EDITOR.]

That this is the meaning is clear, and in this sense the word *evil* and its Hebrew equivalent, "*ra*," are repeatedly used by Moses and the prophets. For example, it is recorded that Lot said "I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me and I die." (Gen. 19:19.) Here it is evident that Lot feared that he would receive bodily injury or be killed; and these are called "*evil*." Again it is said, "The Lord will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt upon thee." (Deut. 7:15.) Here bodily affliction or diseases are called "*evil*." Again, the Israelites "Forsook the Lord and served Baal." "And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them...into the hands of their enemies." "The hand of the Lord was against them for evil...and they were greatly distressed." (Judges 2:13-15.) In this case Israel sinned against God, and he suffered their enemies to make war on them and spoil them; and this calamity is called "*evil*." Further, the Hebrew word *ra*, rendered *evil*, is also translated as follows: Adversity: "Ye have this day rejected your God who saved you out of all your [*ra*] adversities." (1 Sam. 10:19.) Afflictions: "Many are the [*ra*] afflictions of the

righteous." (Psa. 34:19.) Trouble: "In the time of [*ra*] trouble he will hide me." (Psa. 27:5.) Hurt: "I will deliver them for their [*ra*] hurt." (Jer. 24:9.) Distress: "Ye see the [*ra*] distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste." (Neh. 2:17.) Harm: "Look well to him and do him no [*ra*] harm." (Jer. 39:12.) It is also translated "misery," "calamities," "ill," "sorrow," and many other words.

It will be seen, then, by the use of the word, as well as by the connection in which it is found in our text, and the contrast there drawn between peace and evil, that not sin, but calamity, is meant. There is, therefore, as we have said, not a particle of authority in our text for the blasphemous, God-dishonoring theory of these false teachers. On the contrary, in marked contrast with this vile charge are the repeated and pointed declarations of God through his holy apostles and prophets; for they all bear witness to the holiness of his character, and of all his works and ways. For example: God exhorted the people of Israel through Moses, saying, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44.) And through Peter he exhorts the Gospel church, saying, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Pet. 1:15,16.) By Isaiah (who wrote our text) God is called "the Holy One" thirty times, and once he emphasises it by adding, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord." But if these theorists be right, the prophet was guilty of inconsistency and falsehood. Again, David records that "The Lord is righteous in all his ways (acts) and holy in all his works." (Psa. 145:17.) Now, it is clear that he could not be holy in all his works if he were the author of sin and crime. Further, Jeremiah says, "The Lord is [**R1351 : page 13**] righteous." (Lam. 1:18.) And Samuel testifies that, "As for God, his way is perfect." (2 Sam. 22:31.) And still further, "Thus saith the Lord:...let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness

[not wickedness] in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." – Jer. 9:22,24.

This exhortation and this glorious expression of God's character should inspire unbounded confidence, and bring lasting comfort to those who honor and love him. It should likewise, by making the folly of those who dishonor him apparent, bring them shame and confusion of face. Not only is he thus over and over declared righteous and holy, but he is also proclaimed "A God of truth and without iniquity." (Deut. 32:4,5.) Also "A just Lord, and will not do iniquity." – Zeph. 3:5.

Habakkuk testifies that "Thou [God] art of purer eyes than to behold [*i.e.*, with approval] evil, and cannot look [denoting his abhorrence] upon iniquity." (Hab. 1:13.) James says, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." (James 1:13.) And the Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psa. 66:18.) Again he says, "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." (Psa. 5:4,5.) Then with David we would say, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." (Psa. 97:12.) "Give thanks, ...make known his deeds,...talk of his wondrous works, glory ye in his holy name." – 1 Chron. 16:8-10.

But the advocates of this God-dishonoring theory prefer to reverse all this; for they rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of his unholiness (?): they make known his evil (?) deeds, talk of his evil (?) works, and glory in giving him an unholy name. But their folly should be manifest to all; for the evidences are overwhelmingly conclusive that God has not corrupted mankind, but that "They have deeply corrupted themselves." – Hosea 9:9.

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