

# Despite Circumstances, You Can Find Joy

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 16 May 2019

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Isaiah 45, if you'll turn there. Tonight, there's been a theme through the five-minute preachers, the songs that we have sung together, is that despite circumstances that you can find a peace, a hope, a joy in Jesus.

And Austin, sharing his heart with us, his story, loved it so much. The Bible tells us that God takes those that are lonely and isolated, he places them in homes. I'm glad that he placed you here with us, Austin, for this time.

And then Greg continued on that. And then if you were listening, that song is very doctrinally rich. You should listen to that song every time you read the Bible. We'd probably appreciate it even more. I just wanted to continue listening to that.

That was wonderful. And tonight, we're talking about in Isaiah 45. This is the passage that we're on as we go through the book of Isaiah. Next Thursday night, Jason Hope preaches.

And the following Thursday night, we have the ordination service for Brother Ty Pepperdine. And it's been a little bit of time since we've been in Isaiah. But we have a story of King Cyrus. That's what takes place in the first eight verses where Cyrus is told.

[ 1 : 0 0 ]     We've heard a little bit about him so far. But Cyrus is going to become king. Not now, but in the future. And he's being prophesied about. Then we get to verse number nine. We have some questioning that's going to take place. So I want to look at the what about Cyrus.

And then we'll spend the most of the time on why. Why is it Cyrus, God, answering a question? When your kids question you, sometimes it's not a big deal. It's kind of irritating, right? Are we there yet?

That's a popular question they like to ask when you're going on a road trip. It's amazing what kids think you know and what they don't think you know. They think you should know, like, everything about astrophysics. But they don't think you're smart enough to know the simple things of life.

You know, why is the sun on fire? Or why is the sun so hot? Because it's on fire. That's all I have to tell her. You know, I don't know the answer to a lot of the questions that my kids would ask. Though those are just normal questions.

But when they ask you a question that goes towards motive, they say something to you that makes you question, are you going to care for them? Are we going to eat tonight? Is there supper? Is there anything for me? Or why did you get on to that kid but you didn't get on to me?

[ 1 : 5 8 ]     That means that they're questioning your motive. And that gets to you. It gets to me. And I'm venting here to you. And this is therapy. Charge me if you need to. And they question your motive or your logic or why you're doing something.

Your plans. Your intellect. They see things better from their point of view. And we do that to our God. A group of people do that here. And God responds and explains to them, you don't know what I know.

You weren't here when I was here. When I started, I made the decisions. And I see five things from this passage that I want to share with you that will help you when we question. Joe, if you happen to have that slide, I gave it to you kind of late.

But if you have it, I'd like to go ahead and walk through it as we get started here. Five different things. So five ways that God responds to the question, what are you doing? What are you doing? I get asked that sometimes, a legitimate question.

What are you doing? I ask God that question sometimes. What are you doing? My wife says she likes it when people give you the points in advance. She also says she likes it when I end on time. I'll try to do at least one of those.

[ 2 : 56 ] Okay? So number one, know your role in the story. That's what he's going to tell you. He's going to say, you need to know your role in this story. Who you are. Who I am. Number two, trust my motives, especially when you don't understand my plan.

Number one, God had a righteous plan in Cyrus here. We shouldn't question his motives when we don't see what it is that he's doing. Number three, there's more going on than you could ever understand.

I'm excited about the fact that my God is wiser and has greater wisdom and knowledge than I have. If I could understand everything in life, it would have to be very simple. But it's complicated.

Number four, even in moments of doubt, be certain I'm at work when he seems hidden to us. And then last, be confident my way is the best way. His way of accomplishing the goal is the best way possible for us.

So here's Cyrus. He has chosen. Verse one, thus saith the Lord to his anointed, the Cyrus whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him. And I will loose the loins of a king that opened before him.

[ 3 : 59 ] The two leave gates and the gates shall not be shut. So anointed, chosen, set aside. He is going to take this man named Cyrus. He's going to choose him for a purpose. And that purpose is to bring deliverance to those people.

Sounds like good news to me. Sounds like good news to you. But what isn't good news about it is that he is a pagan king that does not know the Lord. And so this brings some questions to them.

If God had made a commitment to David and his line, how could God do such a thing? How could God use this man in that way? Why not somebody of the line of David? Why not a God-fearing man would get this opportunity here?

But God is speaking to Cyrus 150 years in advance. He will get to read this later on. But God is speaking to him. Look at verse four. It says, He doesn't just say there is going to be a king.

That would be pretty amazing, right? If he was able to lay out what's going to happen. But he not only says who the king is going to be. He names him by name. And even names the enemy that isn't the enemy yet.

[ 5 : 05 ] It's amazing. God's prophecy. We should be encouraged by it. That God is going to deliver them. But they question, why are you going to work like that? The Old Testament they question them. Romans 9 20.

Nay, but O man, who art thou that replyest against God? Shall the thing form the say to him that formed it? Why hast thou made me thus? And the Old Testament people question the way God did things. And the New Testament people did.

And in the current day, we question God. Not what are you doing? But why are you choosing to do it this way? And then we see God responding here to what are you doing? The first one is, he tells us to know your role in the story.

Verse number 9. Woe unto him that striveth with his maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth, what makest thou or thou work? He hath no hands.

What is the piece of clay on the wheel going to say to the master potter that is making it? If we had time and had singing ability, we would sing that song. What is that song? He's the master and I'm the clay.

[ 6 : 06 ] He's still working on me. You want to sing it, don't you, Miss Sandy? Come on up here. Okay. But he's the potter and we're the clay. And it's crazy for us to look at him and say, I don't think that you're doing this the best way.

He is the creator. Verse 12. I have made the earth and I have created man upon it. He is the creator. Who is the Cyrus? And then who are the Babylonians? I thought the Syrians were the enemy.

He knows things we don't know because he is the creator here. He's going to make three promises. He's going to say it's to open the gates of the brass in verse 1. That's going to be fulfilled when they capture Babylon. It says he's going to discover hidden treasures.

When he goes in, he takes out two wealthy cities and he gets something like 30,000 pounds of gold. There's hidden treasures that people didn't know about but God knows about.

And then he's going to strengthen Cyrus for the work. That God is going to work through him even though nobody wants God to work through him. That is the way that God is choosing to work. Look at how often God references himself in the work that he's going to do.

[ 7 : 07 ] We must believe that God works in this world or none of this will seem possible. How is God going to use a pagan king to bring deliverance to us on an enemy we don't even know about? Verse 1, and I will loose. This is the Lord speaking.

I will loose the loins of the king. Verse 2, I will go before thee. Verse 2 again, I will break into pieces the gates of the brass. Verse 3, I will give thee the treasures of darkness. And then how is a pagan king going to do this?

It would require God holding his hand and walking him through it. That's what verse 1 says. This isn't about Cyrus. Cyrus is just an earthly instrument that God is going to use.

And he's going to take him by the right hand. And he's going to do it all. He's going to set up all the dominoes. He's going to knock them all over. And how is God going to use somebody that's unlikely like Cyrus? Because it isn't going to be Cyrus.

It isn't going to be his power. It's not going to be his might that God is going to do that. God works in ways we don't like at times because we forget that he's involved in the story.

[ 8 : 06 ] We forget that it's him that's working through the circumstances. That he is very much alive in what is happening. He's not far off. He's not distant. He is intervening in this world. He is active and alive in what's happening here in life.

Number two, which is true. All right, number two. Trust my motives, especially when you don't understand my plan. We can trust his heart when we don't know what his hand is doing.

We can trust his motives when we don't understand his plan. I don't know what you're sitting in today. I don't know what you're about to go into. But I know that we're supposed to be in Isaiah chapter number 45 tonight believing that God has this for you and for me.

God's plans were consistent. Verse 13, I have raised him up in righteousness and I will direct all of his ways. Trust me. People of Israel, trust me. I am doing what is right for you even though you don't understand.

This week I was willing to take Selah to the doctor's visit. I didn't know why it was so important that I took Selah to the doctor's visit. I don't normally take the kids to the doctor's visit.

[ 9 : 10 ] But Stephanie scheduled it on a Monday so I could be involved in that. Because I like to be involved. All right? What I didn't know is that Selah was getting a shot. All right? And so try to explain to a four-year-old.

You don't say things like, it feels like a bumblebee. No, bumblebees are horrible. All right? I'll take a shot every day over being stung by a bumblebee. It's going to be for a second. And she said, is it going to be big or is it going to be little? I don't know how to answer that.

I'm not a doctor. But when she saw the needle, she thought it was big. And so there I was trying to explain to her. And she said, if you will hold me. And the doctor let me hold her. And she got the shot. And we went to five below to get a toy.

All right? That was my negotiating. Which is a great store. Right? Because they can't find anything over \$5 in that store. And so she gets it. But I'm having to explain to her, you don't understand needles.

You don't know why you need this shot. You don't understand a lot of things. But you just got to trust my motives. I'm your dad. I wouldn't be bringing you here if it wasn't what mom told us to do.

[ 10 : 07 ] All right? So Cyrus, he would liberate the Jewish captives and permit Jerusalem to be rebuilt at the price of \$0. Completely free. When you get your enemies to do the work for you, you also get your enemies to pay the bills.

Verse 11. Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and His Maker, asking me things that come concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands, command you me. And I have made the earth and created man upon it. I have evened my hands and stretched out the heavens.

All their hosts have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways. He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for the price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts.

What a genius, wonderful plan that God was working here. God is working to bring people to him. Verse 24. Surely shall one say in the Lord, have I righteousness of strength?

Even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against them shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. God is doing a big work here.

[ 11 : 09 ] He is going to bring nations to him. He's going to bring to a point where people are going to recognize the power of God, of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament that the children of Israel are worshiping, that is unlike any of the other gods.

He's going to make himself known, and we shouldn't question his motives. That you may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none beside me, and I am the Lord, and there is none else.

What is God's plan? God's plan is simple to know. God is wanting Austin Cook to know that he loves him. God did not want those things to happen in Austin's life. He lived dealing with the results of other people's sins.

Our God was not the author of that. But God's plan in Austin's life was always the same. It wasn't his comfort, but it was his closeness to God. Austin, I know you don't like this, but I'm drawing you to me.

I know this isn't what you would choose for yourself, but I'm drawing you to me and doing a work in his heart that we're seeing how it makes sense on this side of it. Here, God is working.

[ 12 : 10 ] His motives are always the same, working towards Romans 14, 11, where every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. That's what God is doing. We should always know that's God's desire.

My mom called me the other day. She doesn't call too often. Don't say anything, dear. All right? But I was talking to my mom. We talk about it every day. Okay, I'll just go ahead and tell you. All right? And she was saying she was talking to somebody, and the lady had just lost her husband, and she was upset, and she said, why didn't God do anything?

I've lost my husband, and God didn't do anything. What do I say? And I say, Mom, you know what God did. 2,000 years ago, he left heaven, and he came to earth, and he died on a cross so that that husband and wife will never have to be separated.

Let's never accuse God of doing nothing in the darkest hours. He's already done something. He's already done the ultimate. He's already taken away the sting of death. He's already made it possible. So God is not inactive.

He has done something, and his motive is for us to know him and to know him more and more with our lives. Number three, there is more going on than you could ever understand. Not only do we only see a tiny fraction of what God is doing in our lives, but the part that we see, we often don't even understand that.

[ 13 : 20 ] There's 1,000 things going on at any given time. We understand a little bit, and we don't even understand all that he is doing. I'm going to try something dangerous at Vision. I'm going to use a sports analogy, all right? I've got Kyle still here with me, but most of you are checking out.

But something we all understand is referees in basketball. It's really advanced because a referee on the court doesn't have the same perspective if you're watching at home on your big screen. You're really in a better position to make some of those calls.

So there's a warehouse in New Jersey where they watch the games, and they have earpieces that tell them, and they can review the game to see if who knocked the ball out because it becomes so advanced because there's so many moving parts on a basketball court that they can't just trust the four or five blind mice on the court to figure out what's going on.

All right, I'm not mad at refs, okay? But I did play basketball in high school, and they held me back a little bit. But the refs here can only have a limited perspective. They don't see what's going on.

Like what this one comedian said was, I don't understand why people would ask me what I think about global warming. I don't even understand rain. Sometimes it's raining and the sun's out. So I can't explain to you why it rains, so I certainly can't explain global warming to you.

[ 14 : 26 ] There's so many things in this world we don't understand. There's so many things that we don't have the proper perspective on that we can't see, that we're not in the right position to understand, but our God understands, and He knows.

And people question Him. One of the common beliefs to say that God does not exist is the idea that people pray and that God does not answer their prayers. Kind of a prayer test.

Famous atheist named Dawkins, that's what he said. All these people go and they pray to this idol. They've been doing it for years. Thousands upon thousands of people pray to this idol. God never answers their prayers. So that means that God does not exist.

Well, the problem with that is that that would mean that God would have the same knowledge that we have. That God would act the same way we do because God is the same as us. So Richard Dawkins says this, but another atheist, he says, that's not the God that Christians profess to believe.

Stay with me here, okay? The God that you and I believe is not a super version of us. It's not just the smartest person in the room. It would be more like this. What it is like is to be a purely spiritual being, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, who understands immediately and completely all the ramifications of any action throughout all time and for eternity and takes into account any decision.

[ 15 : 40 ] All these ramifications, including the physical and the spiritual good, that would result not just in regard to any single person praying, but in regard to everyone and everything in the present and indefinite future who would be affected.

Basically, when we're playing checkers, God is playing three-dimensional chess. He understands things on a level that we'll never comprehend. He is not just a super human. He is God.

He is holy and He is separate. And so He does things in a way that we do not understand. Verse 14, And so they would look at Him and say, There is no God like Him.

We do not always seek the work that God is doing, but we can trust His work. Proverbs 21, There's things that we can't measure and that we can't know that God's doing, but He is at work.

Number four, Even in the moments of doubt, you can be certain that God has a plan. Isaiah bursts out in praise and adoration to God. In verse 15, Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior.

[ 17 : 02 ] Thou shalt be ashamed, thou shalt confound it. All of them, they shall go to confusion together, that maker of idols. But Israel shall be saved, the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. You shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O Israel, the Savior. We don't see the way that He is working. His way, He seems hidden to us. We should know this.

We're going through the book of Esther, right? We understand that God is very active in the story, even when we don't see Him being active in the story. One of my favorite preachers, Adrian Rogers, said, and I don't know if this is true, but I've been told, if you stand at the bottom of a well, and in the middle of the day, and you look up, you can see the stars in the sky.

And I was a little disappointed. Adrian Rogers, you're so smart. No, you can't see the stars if you're standing at the bottom of a well. No matter how deep the well is, you can't look up to the sky and see the stars, because of the brightness in the sky.

It's going to be nighttime. But the point that was being made was, there's certain things that we will never see, and we'll never understand, till those dark hours in our lives. So what we think is a mistake, is God taking us in a journey, to a place that He wants to take us to, because He's doing a sanctifying work in our hearts.

[ 18 : 13 ] We should rejoice in the fact that He knows more than we do. When we see that God's doing something we don't understand, we should pray this, as Paul in Romans 11, 33, Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been a counselor, who has first given Him, it shall be recompensed unto Him, for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, and to all things to whom be glory forever.

Amen. We should be able to say, God is doing something, and I don't understand it, but that doesn't keep me from rejoicing in it. I don't have to understand everything He's doing to trust Him, and He's working, even in our moments of doubt.

And then lastly here, I did this, God's answer to, What are you doing, Lord? I did this way because I have a reason. I always have a reason. God appealed to the nations, acknowledged Him as the only God.

The Lord is defending His power, first in His purpose in raising up Cyrus, in verses 1 through 8, and then through His prophecy, His argument that He is making, verse 18, For thus saith the Lord, Thou have created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it, He has established it, He has created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited, I am the Lord, and there is none else.

[ 19 : 26 ] I have not spoken in secret, in dark places of the earth, I have said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye in vain, the Lord spake righteousness, I declare things that are right, assemble yourselves and come, draw near together, you are the escape of the nations.

They have no knowledge that has set up the wood, or their graven image, and pray unto a God that cannot save. Tell ye and bring them near, ye let them take counsel together, as declare this from an ancient time, who has told it from that time, have not I the Lord, and there is no God else beside me, a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me.

I have a plan, I always have a plan, and you can trust it, is what He is telling them. Unlike all the graven images, unlike all the false gods of this world, that have to be carried around, that we have to look to for answers, that know nothing, our God completely knows what's going on, and He has a plan, and He's working in our lives.

One of the exciting things about being a believer, is watching God unveil His plans for our lives. That's what's exciting about discipleship, and watching people grow up. I don't know what God has in store for them, but when He does do what He's going to do, I want to be on the front row, of watching it happen.

As Philip, as being a knucklehead, an unbeliever in high school, and then God saves him, and takes him to Thailand, his mom got to watch God unveil a plan, and there was times, where she did not have any idea, what was going to happen, but she trusted God, she trusted that God loved her son, she prayed to Him, she stayed faithful, at what she was given to do, and we get to rejoice with her today.

[ 21 : 00 ] You don't have to know God's will, if you're confident in God's Word, and His Word is, I love you, Austin, I love you, I'll take care of you, you can trust me here.

Now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace, and believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, Romans 15, 13, the God of hope, should fill you with joy and peace, when the circumstances of this world can't do it, the God of hope can.

Efficiency and speed, and directness is not what God is about, His purpose, is to sanctify the traveler. When you travel, you try to get the direct flight, to wherever you're going, you like to go through TSA, as fast as you can, you want to be in the airport, as little as possible, and you want to make it as quick, and as efficient as possible, but that's not normally what happens, right?

Just like in your life, you want the direct route, to where you're going, you want it to be as easy as possible, but God's plan for your life, was not efficiency, and it wasn't speed, and directness, but He's doing a sanctifying work, in your life, and we can trust Him, and we thank Him, we can trust our God, even when we don't understand, and I hope you'll tell Him tonight, that you recognize, that His way is best, verse 3 said, and I will give thee, the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches, of secret places, that thou mayest know, that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel, He's speaking here, of Cyrus, the treasures that would be given, the hidden riches, and secret, but in trusting God, and dark hours, there's also incredible riches, to be found, by every one of us in here, it is a shame, to live the joyless Christian life, with a God that we can trust, He's good, and He has a plan, bring that first slide up, before I pray, I want to review with you, these five things, that when we ask God, what it is that He is doing, in this world, He tells us, know that your role in the story,

He's the creator, and we're the claim, He knows more than we do, we can trust His motives, especially if we don't understand, His plan, we don't like the plan, but we like the one, that made the plan, so we're going to be okay, there's more going on, than we could ever understand, stop trying to figure it out, stop trying to diagnose the problem, stop thinking you can fix it, there's way more going on, than you'll ever understand, but it's okay, because He's good at what He does, He understands, how it all works together, and then lastly, or fourth, even in moments of doubt, be certain, that He is at work, and be confident, that His way is best.