

Ezra: God Can Use Evil To Accomplish Good

(this transcript has been lightly edited for readability)

I love Ezra! Well, I love the whole Bible, but I just love Ezra. You have this moment where Israel returns from captivity, and you can say, “Ahhh! God's not done; the story is not over. Maybe out of this ragbag of remnant people, He can do something.”

But there's something else that confronts me when I read Ezra that is mind blowing to me, and I'm just going to ask you, as I talk about this, to put this in your theological pipe and smoke it. Or, if that offends you, get out this theological gum and chew it because you have to have this in your theology. God is willing and able to use evil to accomplish good. Are you rattled? Does that bother you? Is that outside of the way you think about spiritual things?

I think often we have this good God and bad god thing where there's two sovereign gods. One is evil; we call him Satan. One is good; we call Him God. And every bad thing is under the sovereignty of Satan; every good thing is under the sovereignty of God. Well, that's not what's presented in Scripture. God raises up Cyrus, a pagan, evil king, to supply what is necessary and to lead the rebuilding of the House of God in Israel. God actually works in the heart of this man to do this unthinkable thing.

Now it should not surprise us because, elsewhere in Scripture, we're told that God rules over the affairs of nations--that He raises kings up and He casts kings down. Proverbs says, I love this, “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wills.”

Listen, God's toolbox, the tools that He can use to accomplish His purpose (Are you ready for this?) includes everything. Everything is in His toolbox. He is unshakably Sovereign, and He can use whomever He wills to do what ever He wills, whenever He wills it for the sake of His people and for the sound of His glory. That's the God we serve.

And in the celebration that we should all feel as Israel is coming back, we should weep with joy that these people are coming back, and the plan of God is not done, and it's going to continue, and God's going to find a way to fulfill His promises even though unthinkable things have happened. We should not forget that God raises up people whom you wouldn't normally trust, whom you wouldn't normally think that anything good could come from them, to provide what is good for His people. God's toolbox is everything.

What do we see happen? We see God's Law being read again. We see worship happening again. We see life again for the people of God. Captivity was not the end of the story. We're all exiles and captives, and God uses a variety of means to bring us back to Him, back to relationship with Him, back to the worship of Him, back to the love of His Law, what He says is right and good.

Now maybe your problem today is your God is too small; He's too limited; you don't understand the hugeness of this God, how big His toolbox is. He can really use everything to do what is best for His people and His glory! That's your God!

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