




God Is Our Refuge

Refuge Quarterly Newsletter



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3618 Olney-Laytonsville Road, Olney, MD 20832



*Have I not
commanded you
Be strong and
courageous.
Do not be
afraid; do not
be discouraged,
for the Lord your
God will be with
you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9*

Inside This Issue

Pg 2

Did God Create Evil?

Pg 3

A Good Man, A Great Legacy

Pg 4

Words of Encouragement
Staying Connected

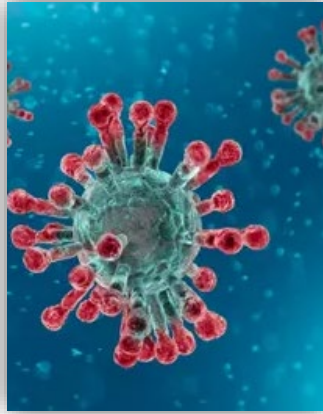
Pg 5

Community Awareness
Visitor's Corner

Did God Create Evil?

With the recent outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, some have asked "Did God create evil?" "Is God responsible for the evil in the world?" At first it might seem that if God created all things, then evil must have been created by God.

One of the often-used excuses for rejecting the God of the Bible is if God is omnipotent (as the Bible teaches), and since evil exists in the world (as everyone can see), then God must be the author of evil or incapable of preventing it. Either way, such reasoning insists, that this kind of God is not worthy of worship.



The Bible is clear that **God is morally perfect** (Deut. 32:4; Matt. 5:48), and **it is impossible for Him to sin** (Heb. 6:18). At the same time, His absolute justice demands that He punish sin. This judgment takes both temporal and eternal forms (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11–15). In its temporal form, the execution of God's justice is sometimes called "evil" because it seems to be evil to those undergoing it (Heb. 12:11). However, the Hebrew word for evil (ra) used in Isaiah 45:7, does not always mean moral evil. Indeed, the context indicates that it should be translated, as the NKJV and other modern translations do, as "calamity." Thus, God is not the author of "evil" in the moral sense.

God does not cause evil. The most precise description of the character of God is that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). There can be no impurity or inconsistency within the nature of the Godhead.

But what about Isaiah 45:7? "*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.*" This verse implies that God is indeed the creator of evil. But we have to look at any given verse of scripture through the lens of the totality of the Bible. When we draw meaning from a specific passage we should pay attention to the context of those words because context can have a dramatic impact on what those words mean for us today.

Those words record God speaking to specific people at a specific period of time. That additional information truly matters when it comes to understanding what God is saying to us today. It is critical that we put that verse in context and look at it in the light of the entirety of scripture.

God's promise of calamity in Isaiah 45:7, and in fact all of chapter 45, comes in the middle of several chapters of prophecy spoken directly to Israel and Judah.

Then in the midst of all that prophecy, chapter 45 specifically talks about king Cyrus. Cyrus was the king of Persia who defeated the Meads, unified their two kingdoms and in the process created about the largest empire up to that point in history. He also issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple.

One big reason this passage is so significant is because it talks very specifically about the things this king would do and even calls him out by name hundreds of years before he was even born.

Chapter 45 predicts things Cyrus ends up doing in relation to the Jews in that day. In the time of Moses the Israelites made a covenant with God. The deal they made with God basically boiled down to the people being blessed if they followed the law and cursed if they did not. By the time Isaiah comes along the Israelites have pretty much blown it across the board. They are experiencing first hand the consequences of their failure to keep their end of the covenant they made with God.

Isaiah 45:5-7 is one of many verses where God reminds them of his own obligation to hold up his end of the covenant even if that meant calamity was due. The context of the verse is speaking of natural phenomena.

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these."

Because the Israelites blew it, God was bound by that agreement to see that the curses came to pass. That covenant required God to bring the curses of Deuteronomy 28 into the lives of those bound by it.

That was the deal then. Fortunately there is an entirely different covenant in place today. When Jesus came along he introduced a whole new covenant. Hebrews 8:6, says this about our new covenant with God. "But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises."

Jesus paid the price for every sin in the entire world, both those who believe and follow Jesus and those who do not. John explicitly said that to us: "He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. (1 John 2:2) We are free of that law of sin and death, which is referring to the old covenant of the Israelites, so, rejoice in knowing that God is not bringing calamity on us today.

A Good Man, A Great Legacy

On April 3, 2020, [Pastor Rufus Lamont Settles](#), was laid to rest. Since his passing, we all seem to have stories about him and his impact on our lives. Some of the stories are inspiring; some are poignant; some are funny; some are thought-provoking. Together, these stories give us just a glimpse of a life well-lived.

The job of a pastor is not an easy one. It has an almost limitless number of duties. Pastors are expected to lead by example. Though they are human and often teach by reflecting on their own mistakes, they are expected to maintain a higher standard of behavior to effectively guide others. They often give counsel, correction, prayers and support to church members in their time of need. They are to be given to hospitality, officiators of weddings, funerals, and baby christenings. The scriptures instruct them to *"shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."* (1Pet. 5:1-3)

Pastor Lamont did all of these things and more. He shared with us many times, over the years, his testimony of surrendering his life to the Lord. In doing so, he inspired us all to see people the way God sees them. He made us understand the life-changing power of salvation. He never took God's saving grace in his life for granted. He loved God and the people of God with his whole heart.

Pastor Lamont was a good leader, husband, father, and faithful servant of the Lord who always wanted more of God. His life was a living example of servant leadership. He could preach in the pulpit and cut the church lawn if needed. He was never lofty or puffed up. He was the first to tell you of his shortcomings and keep you laughing as he shared his personal experiences. He was at heart, a people person. He was always ready to greet his congregation with a smile, no matter what he was going through.

Over the past two years he faced a multitude of health challenges but he never lost his faith and trust in the Lord. His determination, regardless of the circumstances was a true example of persevering under trials and enduring hardship as a good soldier of Christ.

The Refuge Church family was blessed by his leadership, and thankful to his family for sharing him with us. He left with us the lasting legacy of a strong commitment to God, faith, and family.

We will miss his presence, his beautiful smile and warm spirit. We greatly appreciate the many sacrifices he made to study, deliver the Word of God and serve our congregation for over thirty years.

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **14** For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Him. **15** According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. - 1 Thess. 4:13-15



Words of Encouragement

Do you ever stop to smell the roses? Or feel the light breeze of the wind or the warmth of the sun on your face? Do you listen to the birds chirping early in the morning before the sun comes up?

The beauty of creation is still here for us to enjoy. On the other hand, life as we know it, has changed for all of us. But as my son-in-law often says "no worries". Nothing happens that surprises God. Change happens. It must come. Often it doesn't seem pleasant at the time. Hopefully, from change, growth will happen.

We don't run from it or wish it away. We embrace change knowing that it will accomplish what God purposed it to accomplish. And though weeping endures for a night, joy truly does come in the morning.



Appreciate the fact that we get to spend more time with our families and though sometimes we grit our teeth through it, we get to spend more time with our children. Some wonderful things are happening.

During these times, continue to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the word of the Lord. Knowing that Christ is our refuge and strength and He will keep us in perfect peace if we keep our minds stayed on Him. The joy of the Lord truly is my strength and shall continue to be so.

We serve an awesome, all-knowing, ever present, almighty God. Remember these things.

Mucho Love,

Deborah Butler



Every Praise!

God created us for relationship with Him and with one another, And even though we are currently challenged with practicing **social distancing**, through it we can - and should - continue to sing and worship the Lord together.

Consider *Colossians 3:15-17* and *Ephesians 5:19-20*

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

Today, be encouraged to call a friend and just sing together on the phone, share or re-share stories of the great things God has done in your life - recite scripture together - have fun with it! **Social distancing** or not, let's take **every** circumstance and use it as an opportunity to worship! Indeed, *Every Praise is to OUR God!*



During the days of COVID-19, let your community awareness efforts include:

- Staying Healthy
- Praying for those in your community
- Praying for New York
- Looking for ways to be a blessing to someone else
- Mailing or emailing an encouraging note to uplift a friend or family member



ONLINE GIVING



Download the Givelify app on your mobile device, visit our website at www.refugeinolney.com or [click here](#).



Sunday

- 9:30 am Prayer and Message on ZOOM
- 11:00 am Message on Facebook – like our Facebook page at RefugeofOlney

Bible Study –Join us on Zoom

- Thursday Evenings at 7:30pm
- Send us an email request to refugeroc@gmail.com and we will send you an invitation to join us on ZOOM

Women's Quarterly Prayer – Second Sunday from 8 -9 am

- June 14, 2020
- September 13, 2020
- December 13, 2020



Our Leadership Team:

- R. Lamont and Kathy Settles, Sr. Pastor
- Orlando and Denise Edwards, Pastor
- Elder Jessie and Deborah Lynch-Butler
- Elder Gary and Deborah Randolph
- Raphael and Robin Rice, Deacon/Deaconess
- Minister Taeron Flemming, Youth Pastor

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Online Giving: www.givelify

Serving Our Community; Serving You