



## God Makes the Way

*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" (Isaiah 45:2, NKJV).*

**T**oday's verse is another of God's tremendous promises to His people. God's promises are revelations of His heart to us; with each promise to His children, He is making a commitment of Himself. And God does not make idle promises. We read in Scripture that "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has he said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good" (Numbers 23:29, *NKJV*). God wants us to know this deep in our hearts. God intends to keep His promises and indeed does keep them all. Thus, they are demonstrations of His faithfulness.

In today's verse from Isaiah 45, God speaks to Cyrus, a Persian king whom God calls His "anointed" (verse 1). God had chosen Cyrus to do a specific work and God promises to help him. Though Cyrus was mighty, the work would take God's help if it were to be accomplished. Any God-given assignment will require God's help, no matter whether we are great or small and no matter the size of the assignment. God gives us challenges that require we depend on His ability not ours. He wants to stretch us and grow us. Being a father, a mother, a teacher, a social worker, a builder, a seamstress, a musician, a wife, a husband—these are just a few of God's large assignments. In fact, God doesn't consider any of *His* assignments small.

**T**o us, as well as to Cyrus, God says, "I will go before you." God is clearly saying "I will be with you"—but not only that, He will go in front. Imagine that. It is God's presence in front of us making the path smooth. Though Satan will always oppose God's people, who is he when God is going before us? What obstacle can truly block our way when we have the Almighty clearing the path? Do we believe that? When we have a God

assignment, we have the promise that God will be dealing with whatever stands in our path to oppose His work through us. To be sure our faith will be tested. After all, mountains, gates of bronze and iron bars can look formidable. We do not face them alone, however, and not in our own strength. We can remind God of this promise, assured that He is faithful to keep His Word.

"I will go before you" indicates also that God expects us to move forward. Though, there were occasions God told His people to "stand still" or "be still," these moments often were meant for refocusing their attention on God instead of their crisis. These times usually were temporary and in preparation for the next move. Most of the time God wants His people advancing—not stopping. There are enemy strongholds to be conquered. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). That is a picture of God's people moving forward spiritually against the very seat of Satan's power—and winning. God says we can win, but we must move forward to do it. No race was ever won standing still.

**T**here have been times in my life when I have felt like I was taking two steps forward and one step back. Even sometimes it seemed I was making no progress at all or maybe going backward. Thankfully, each time as I called on God to help me, I was able to move forward. I ask God to get us all on a path of steady progress in our spiritual growth and relationship with Him and on a smoother course for greater productivity in the work He has called us to. I want fewer times of getting bogged down, side tracked or derailed. We will not be perfect until heaven, but God can change our lives by the power of His word and His Spirit.

God “will make the crooked places straight.” In today’s verse, the crooked places are most likely the winding path through mountains. The Revised Standard Version and the New International Version translate this part saying God will “level the mountains.” In other words, God will use dynamite to make a way through the mountains that may block our path. We won’t always have to wind our way slowly over narrow mountain trails. God will make a highway if necessary on which we may travel smoothly and quickly.

**M**y family and I live in the mountains of East Tennessee, and we have visited the Rocky Mountains of the West. I have often marveled as I imagined the early pioneers of our nation traveling through those mountains in horse-drawn wagons. Forging a path was slow, tedious and hard. God wants to make our spiritual path a straight one with the mountains leveled. For a while, if our path has been hard, there has been purpose in that. However, I believe the time comes when God wants to clear the way. Maybe that time has come for you. If things have been really difficult for a long while, you may have trouble believing that. Are you doing what God has called you to do? If so, in His time God will step in and intervene to facilitate His purpose in your life. He will begin to “level the mountains” before you.

God says He will “break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.” This pictures a fortified city, an enemy stronghold. Humanly speaking, the situation may look impossible. For Cyrus in the Book of Isaiah, it was most likely an impenetrable city or fortress. God intended to bring Himself glory by making a way for Cyrus to conquer where there truly was no way. Everyone would recognize that Cyrus had conquered by the help of God Almighty.

**A** most interesting note about this passage directed to King Cyrus is that he was a pagan—someone who did not know God. God, however, planned to use Cyrus to defeat the Babylonians and to allow God’s people to return to their homeland. This story is an example of how God can use anyone He pleases—even unbelievers—to bless His people.

It is likely the Israeli captives in Babylon had no clue how God would accomplish their return to Israel. They had suffered at the hands of godless rulers for about 70 years. On God’s timetable the time for deliverance drew near, but circumstances gave no visible clue how God would accomplish this. God, however, had a plan. He would raise up a pagan king not only to set His people free but also to help them rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. God would go before Cyrus and before His people Israel to make their path straight. Don’t you know that if God can do that for them, He can do the same for you?

**G**od has pointed out to me that I should stop wondering how He might do something and simply trust Him. When God’s time arrives, I can know He has already worked out the details—no matter what circumstances look like. When I am wondering how, I am not fully resting my faith in God. If He wants to, God can even use an unbelieving king to help me—and you.

Take a moment to think of a situation in which you need God to go before you and level some mountains, break the gates of bronze or cut some iron bars. You may have felt like you were shut up in prison. These things are not too difficult for our God. Read today’s verse once more and ask the Holy Spirit to speak it to your heart and to fulfill this promise for you. Trust Him to do it—and try not to be too surprised at *how* He does it. **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY

Teaching Letter 20

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