

Read: Isaiah 45:20-25

God Alone Gives Peace to All Nations

Isaiah 45:22

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Arms folded, back turned, feet planted firmly in place. Can you remember a time when you assumed this position? Maybe you were defying your parents' authority. Maybe you were trying to show them that you did not want to hear what they had to say.

To this stance, your parent might say, "Turn around and look at me!" Your parent wants you to face the situation. How do you feel in that moment? Still angry? Ashamed? Afraid to turn around?

Many of the Old Testament people of Israel and Judah assumed a similar stance toward God. They often turned their backs on him. They became friends with ungodly people. Instead of sharing their faith in the one true God, they began following the false gods of other nations. They turned toward their own ideas instead of toward God.

All God wanted was for his nation of people to be special, to live under his protection, and to see his promise of peace fulfilled. He loved them and had made promises to them—promises he intended to keep. So he called out to his people through prophets like Isaiah: "Turn to me and be saved."

These words are not as much a command issued in anger; they are an invitation. The invitation to "turn around" shows just how patient and loving God is. He wants his children to receive the forgiveness that only he can give. The false gods the people had turned to were not capable of issuing forgiveness. Only the true God could do that, because he had a plan to pay for those sins in full. That plan included the birth of God's Son into this world. Jesus lived perfectly, died willingly, and rose victoriously—for us! For that reason, God's people do not have to face an angry God. Because of what Jesus did, we can turn around, tell God we are sorry for our stubbornness, and receive his forgiveness.

No other "god" out there offers that kind of grace! "There is no other," that is like him.

So many people need to hear this message! It's a message God intended for all people of all nations, for all time. Sure, some people will stubbornly turn their backs on him. Even then, God lovingly reaches out, through people like you and me. Using words from the Bible accompanied by our genuine love, we can tell someone who is hurting, angry, or lost that our God—the God of the Bible—invites us all to turn to him for grace, forgiveness, and peace.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What kinds of feelings might make you cross your arms and turn your back on someone? Is that a good way to behave? Why?
- When we turn to God for forgiveness, what will he always do? Why?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did the Old Testament people of God turn away from God so often? What led them astray? Now compare that with you. Any similarities?
- What does God's behavior toward his Old Testament people teach us about him?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Can you think of a time you struggled to forgive someone? How does God's treatment of his Old Testament people provide an example how we are to treat others?
- Explain how this thought applies to us: God's grace is free, but it is also very expensive.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I know I often stubbornly turn away from you. When I sin, please call me back. Help me turn toward you, and help me share the peace I find with others who need to hear it. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Hymn: CW 54:1,3,4 – Where Shepherds Lately Knelt

Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word,
I come in half-belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred;
But there is room and welcome there for me,
But there is room and welcome there for me.

How should I not have known Isaiah would be there,
His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart I stare;
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me,
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.

Can I, will I forget how Love was born and burned
Its way into my heart unasked, unforced, unearned,
To die, to live, and not alone for me.
To die, to live, and not alone for me.