

Isaiah 54:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

Analysis

Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work: and I have created the waster to destroy. This verse grounds God's sovereignty in creation: He made both the weaponsmith (charash, חַרָּשׁ) who forges weapons and the "waster" (mashchit, מַשְׁחִית, destroyer) who wields them. The smith "bloweth the coals" and "bringeth forth an instrument"—God controls the entire process from manufacture to deployment. Similarly, He created the destroyer, suggesting sovereign control over destructive forces.

The verb "created" (bara, בָּרָא) is the same used in Genesis 1:1, denoting divine creative activity. This establishes God's ultimate control over all agents, both constructive (smith) and destructive (waster). The point: if God created those who make weapons and those who wield them, no weapon can succeed against His purposes for His people (v. 17).

From a Reformed perspective, this teaches exhaustive divine sovereignty. God doesn't merely react to evil; He created the mechanisms and agents, using even destructive forces for His purposes. This doesn't make God the author of sin (James 1:13), but does affirm His comprehensive control. Satan, demons, and wicked humans are God's creatures, acting only within His permissive will. This verse grounds assurance—since God created all potential threats, none can ultimately harm His elect (Romans 8:28-39).

Historical Context

Ancient warfare depended on skilled smiths forging weapons—swords, spears, chariots. Philistine control of iron-working technology gave them military advantage (1 Samuel 13:19-22). The destroyer could reference human armies, natural disasters, or spiritual forces (2 Samuel 24:16—destroying angel). Isaiah's point: God created all these, therefore controls them.

Church history demonstrates this principle: persecuting emperors (destroyers) were God's creatures, ultimately unable to destroy the church. Technological developments creating more efficient weapons (gunpowder, nuclear arms) remain under God's sovereign control. The principle extends to spiritual warfare—Satan himself is created, limited by divine permission (Job 1-2), ultimately serving God's purposes despite contrary intentions. God's creative sovereignty ensures His people's ultimate security.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty over both creators and destroyers affect your fear of opposition?
2. What weapons (literal or metaphorical) forged against you need to be seen under God's creative control?
3. How do you reconcile God creating the 'waster' with His goodness and justice?

Interlinear Text

הֵן	אֶנֶכִּי	בָּרָא אֶתִּי	חָכַם	נִפְּחַ	בְּאֵשׁ	פְּחַם
H2005	H595	Behold I have created	the smith	that bloweth	in the fire	the coals
		H1254	H2796	H5301	H784	H6352
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וּמוֹצֵי יָא		כָּל־י	לְמַעַשׂ הוּא	וְאֶנֶכִּי י	בָּרָא אֶתִּי	
and that bringeth forth		an instrument	for his work	H595	Behold I have created	
H3318		H3627	H4639		H1254	
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לְחַבֵּל:		מְשִׁחַ יָת				
the waster		to destroy				
H7843		H2254				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:4 (Creation): The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Exodus 9:16 (Parallel theme): And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

Isaiah 46:11 (Parallel theme): Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

Isaiah 10:15 (Parallel theme): Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.