

God will take away the Cup of His Wrath!

Isaiah 51:17-23 (v. 22)

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I. Historical Background & Biblical Context

During one of Israel's darkest periods, God offered hope, comfort, and courage through His promises in Isaiah 51:17-23. These verses declare a turning point for His people: *God will take away the cup of His wrath*. To fully understand this, we must explore the meaning of the cup of God's wrath and the spiritual and national crisis Israel faced.

Everyone is familiar with a cup, a container that is used for drinking. But in this setting, the cup metaphorically illustrates the wrath of God. God's wrath is never uncontrolled, vengeful, or cruel, but rather, it is righteous and necessary. It responds to anything that opposes Him, harms His creation, or desecrates what is holy. God's perfect love and justice mean that sin cannot be ignored, and sin always provokes His wrath.

So, why was Israel's cup full? Over centuries, the Israelites repeatedly broke God's covenant, ignored His prophets, chased after idols, and refused to repent. Every sin committed added to the cup of God's wrath. Despite God's patience and warnings, the cup kept rising gradually and eventually reached its capacity. When that happened, the cup was given to the people and they experienced the consequences of their sins. For Israel, this began when the Babylonians invaded, destroyed their cities, burned the temple, seized the people, and marched them hundreds of miles away into exile.

Even in exile, the Israelites had something extraordinary: God's promises spoken through His prophet Isaiah that revealed the beautiful truths about His wrath. It is never His final word. Every season of judgment has a divinely appointed end. Wrath and discipline flow from love and lead to restoration. Once sin has been fully addressed and its consequences carried out, God removes the cup of His wrath, and the season of judgement gives way to the season of mercy, healing, and restoration for His People. That is what Isaiah 51:22 declares when it says the cup of God's wrath will be removed.

Behind this promises to restore Israel stood an even greater fulfillment. The ultimate Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, would step forward and take the cup out of Israel's hands and from every sinners' hands in the world. The cup of God's wrath was fully satisfied at Calvary, and now for all who trust in Christ, only the cup of blessing remains.

II. Lesson: God will take away the Cup of His Wrath!

A. The Cup of God's Wrath Drained (verses 17-20)

Verses 17-20 present the condition of God's people, those who had drunk the full cup of His wrath down to the very last drop. The judgment affected every aspect of their life – nationally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. What was once a thriving nation with land, identity, and order was now a scattered community living under foreign rule.

- **The Collapse of Leadership (vs. 18):** The community is portrayed as a helpless mother with no one left to guide her. All leadership had vanished; kings, priests, officials, military leaders were either killed or exiled. So, there was no government to organize, no army that could defend, and no person in authority left to strategize (2 Kings 24 and 25).
- **Destruction, Famine, and War (vs. 19):** The people suffered from destruction, starvation, and war that claimed countless lives. Many who survived were dragged into captivity. They witnessed their cities being burned and their lands ravaged. They saw the destruction of the temple of God; and with it went the worship and sacrifices. (2 Kings 24 and 25)
- **The Exhaustion of the People (vs. 20):** The young and strong, i.e. soldiers, workers, and leaders, were drained of their strength. They could no longer stand, fight, or flee. They were exhausted, trapped, and left completely helpless. No one could comfort them. (2 Kings 25).

This showed the depths of their despair. They were completely left helpless, desolate, and hopeless.

But, in verse 17, God calls His people to wake up from their despair and rise to their feet. This was the signal where everything was about to change. God speaks to His broken people in verse 21, calling them the “afflicted one”. He sees their pain, feels compassion for their suffering, and now is moving in with mercy and comfort.

B. The Cup of God’s Wrath Removed (vs. 22)

‘This is what your Sovereign Lord says, your God, who defends his people: “See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again...” (NIV)

God completely changed the situation. The same God who handed them the cup of His wrath is now the One who removes it. He shifts from being their judge to being their defender and protector. The removal of the cup meant that judgment was finally finished, and their sins were forgiven. After seven decades of exile and suffering, God was bringing closure to this chapter and preparing the way to bring His people home.

This promise ultimately points forward to the cross. Each of us added to the cup of God’s wrath through our sins, but on Calvary, Jesus Christ interceded on our behalf. He took that cup (Mark 14:36) and drank it dry until it was finished (John 19:18-30). Because He drank it all and bore the full measure of judgment for us, God can now extend mercy and forgiveness as he says these same words to us.

C. The Cup of God’s Wrath Passed to the Oppressor (vs. 23)

“...I will put it into the hands of your tormentors, who said to you, ‘Fall prostrate that we may walk on you.’ And you made your back like the ground, like a street to be walked on.” (NIV)

God placed the same cup of His wrath into the hands of Babylon and other oppressors. Those who treated His people with brutality and disregard were now made to experience the same wrath they poured out on others. The tables were completely turned. The oppressors received God’s justice, and His people were vindicated. Babylon eventually fell to King Cyrus of Persia, who issued to decree allowing Israel to return home (Ezra 1-3).

But the ultimate fulfillment is still to come. One day, every power that has ever oppressed God's people, Satan, sin, death, and even people, will drink the cup of His wrath to its last drop (Rev. 14:9-10; 16:19).

III. Conclusion

God's discipline is always purposeful, and His mercy always the final word, never His wrath. When we face trials, suffering, or the consequences of sin, we can trust that God sees our pain, walks with us, and will bring restoration in His perfect timing. Moreover, Christ's sacrifice assures us that our sins have been fully paid for and that we now live under the cup of God's blessing rather than His judgment. Our response to God should be faith, gratitude, and praise. **Amen!**