

Isaiah 26:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.

Analysis

LORD, in trouble have they visited thee (יהי בצר פקדוך / YHWH batzar peqadukha)—The verb **תָּקַדֵּךְ** (paqad, "to visit, attend to") here means to seek God. The noun **צָרָה** (tzar, "trouble, distress, adversity") describes affliction that drives people to God. Human nature often ignores God during prosperity but cries out during crisis—a pattern throughout Scripture (Judges, Psalms, prophets).

They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them (אָצַל לְמַשֵּׁךְ מִסְרָךְ לְמוֹ / tzaqu lachash musareka lamo)—The verb **צָאַק** (tzuq, "to pour out") suggests urgent, desperate prayer. **לְמַשֵּׁךְ** (lachash) can mean "whisper" or "incantation," possibly indicating prayer so desperate it emerges as anguished whispers. **מִסְרָךְ** (musar, "chastening, discipline") shows God's affliction as pedagogical, not merely punitive—suffering designed to produce repentance and dependence.

Historical Context

Isaiah ministered during multiple crises: the Syro-Ephraimite War (735 BC), fall of northern Israel (722 BC), and Sennacherib's invasion (701 BC). Each crisis tested whether Judah would trust YHWH or political alliances. The pattern: when military threats loomed, the people briefly 'visited' God in prayer, yet often returned to idolatry once danger passed. Isaiah calls for enduring faithfulness, not crisis-driven religiosity. This anticipates Jeremiah's message during Babylonian siege—seek God in genuine repentance, not manipulative bargaining.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Why does trouble often drive us to prayer when prosperity doesn't? What does this reveal about our hearts?
2. How can we cultivate faithful prayer during peaceful seasons, not just desperate prayers during crises?
3. What's the difference between God's chastening (which aims at restoration) and His judgment (which aims at justice)?

Interlinear Text

לְחַזֵּךְ	צָקֵל	בָּאָרֶץ	בָּאָדָם	פְּקַד וְבָרָא	יְהִי הָרָא
LORD	in trouble	have they visited	thee they poured out	a prayer	
H3068	H6862	H6485	H6694		H3908

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 5:15 (Parallel theme): I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Psalms 50:15 (Parallel theme): And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.