

Isaiah 54:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

Analysis

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. This verse employs comparative language to juxtapose judgment's brevity against mercy's magnitude. "Small moment" (rega qaton, רֵגַע קָטָן) suggests a brief instant, while "great mercies" (berachamim gedolim, בְּרַחֲמִים גְּדֹלִים) emphasizes abundant, overflowing compassion. The Hebrew rachamim (רַחֲמִים) derives from rechem (רֶחֶם, womb), suggesting motherly, tender compassion.

The verb "forsaken" ('azavtikh, אָזַבְתִּיךָ) acknowledges real abandonment—God doesn't deny the exile's reality. Yet its duration is "small" from divine perspective, however long it seemed to sufferers. The contrasting "gather" (aqabbetsekh, אֶקְבֹּץְךָ) promises reunion, collecting scattered exiles into unity. The proportion is stark: brief forsaking versus abundant gathering, temporary judgment versus enduring mercy.

From a Reformed perspective, this verse addresses the apparent paradox of divine discipline. God's children experience real chastening (Hebrews 12:6), yet this is "for a moment" compared to eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17—"our light affliction, which is but for a moment"). The certainty of gathering grounds assurance—God's anger is momentary, His compassion eternal (Psalm 30:5). This verse teaches that God's essential character is mercy; wrath is His "strange work" (Isaiah 28:21), necessary but not preferred.

Historical Context

The exile lasted approximately 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10)—roughly two to three generations. For those experiencing it, this seemed interminable. Yet from God's eternal perspective and Israel's multi-millennial history, 70 years is indeed "a small moment." The gathering refers to return under Cyrus and subsequent waves.

This principle appears throughout Scripture: Noah's flood (judgment) followed by covenant promise (Genesis 9); Egypt's bondage (400 years) followed by exodus and inheritance; wilderness wandering (40 years) preceding Canaan. In each case, judgment is temporary, mercy enduring. For the church, present suffering is brief compared to "eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Church history confirms this—persecutions end, but God's gathering of His people continues through millennia.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does viewing present trials as 'a small moment' compared to eternal mercies provide perspective?
2. What evidence of God's 'great mercies' can you identify in your current circumstances?
3. How should this proportion (brief forsaking, abundant gathering) shape your response to discipline?

Interlinear Text

בְּרִגָּע	קֵטָן	עֲזַבְתִּי יְיָ	וּבְרַחֲמֵי יָם	גָּדֹל יָם
moment	For a small	have I forsaken	mercies	thee but with great
H7281	H6996	H5800	H7356	H1419
אַקְבֹּצֶנָּה:				
will I gather				
H6908				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 30:5 (Parallel theme): For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Isaiah 26:20 (Parallel theme): Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

2 Peter 3:8 (Parallel theme): But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Micah 4:6 (Parallel theme): In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

Isaiah 60:4 (Parallel theme): Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

Deuteronomy 30:3 (Parallel theme): That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Isaiah 66:18 (Parallel theme): For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

Matthew 23:37 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have

gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

2 Corinthians 4:17 (Parallel theme): For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Isaiah 40:11 (Parallel theme): He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

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