

Isaiah 54:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

Analysis

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. This verse presents one of Scripture's most beautiful contrasts between God's temporary discipline and His eternal love. The Hebrew *be-shetseph qatseph* (בְּשֵׁטֶפֶף קָטֶסֶפֶף, "in a little wrath") uses an unusual word *shetseph*, meaning a brief outpouring or flood, emphasizing the limited, momentary nature of God's anger against His covenant people.

"I hid my face from thee" uses the Hebrew *histartiy panai* (הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי), describing God's withdrawal of His manifest presence—the most severe form of divine discipline short of abandonment. For Israel, God's face represented His favor, blessing, and protective presence (Numbers 6:24-26). Its hiding meant vulnerability to enemies and loss of covenant blessings. Yet this hiding was only "for a moment" (*rega'*, רֵגַע), a fleeting instant compared to eternity.

The contrast intensifies with "but with everlasting kindness" (*be-chesed 'olam*, בְּחֶסֶד עוֹלָם). The word *chesed* encompasses covenant love, loyal devotion, and unfailing mercy—God's self-binding commitment to His people. Qualified by *'olam* (everlasting), it describes love without temporal boundaries. The verb "I will have mercy" (*arachamek*, אֲרַחֲמֶךָ) comes from *racham*, depicting the tender compassion of a mother for her child. The title "LORD thy Redeemer" (*YHWH go'alek*) invokes

God's covenant name alongside His role as kinsman-redeemer, guaranteeing restoration.

Historical Context

Isaiah 54 addresses Israel's situation during and after the Babylonian exile (586-538 BCE), when Jerusalem lay in ruins and God's people endured captivity for their covenant unfaithfulness. The 'hiding of God's face' refers to the exile itself—God's just response to persistent idolatry and social injustice despite centuries of prophetic warning. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple represented the ultimate covenant curse prophesied in Deuteronomy 28.

Yet this chapter offers extraordinary hope: the exile was temporary discipline, not permanent abandonment. The promise of 'everlasting kindness' looks forward to restoration and the new covenant. Ancient Near Eastern treaties typically included curses for covenant violation, often resulting in permanent dissolution. But Israel's covenant rested on God's unchangeable character and promises to Abraham, ensuring ultimate restoration despite Israel's failures.

The chapter's metaphor of a barren woman becoming fruitful (verses 1-3) and a wife briefly abandoned but then restored (verses 4-8) resonated deeply with exiled Israel. The New Testament reveals this restoration's ultimate fulfillment in the new covenant through Christ, where God reconciles both Jew and Gentile, creating a new humanity (Ephesians 2:11-22). Isaiah 54 bridges the judgment of exile and the glory of messianic restoration.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the temporary nature of God's discipline versus His eternal love change how we respond to trials?
2. What does God's title 'the LORD thy Redeemer' reveal about His commitment to restore those He disciplines?
3. How does this verse comfort believers experiencing seasons when God's presence feels distant or hidden?
4. In what ways does this passage point forward to Christ's work of reconciliation and the new covenant?
5. How should the contrast between momentary wrath and everlasting kindness shape our understanding of God's character and our worship?

Interlinear Text

בְּשׁוֹצֵר	קֶצֶר	הִסְתֵּי רִתִּי	פָּנַי	רָגַע	מִמֶּנִּי
In a little	wrath	I hid	my face	from thee for a moment	H4480
H8241	H7110	H5641	H6440	H7281	
וּבְרַחֲמֶיךָ	עוֹלָם	רַחֲמֶיךָ יְיָ	אָמַר	גֹּאֲלִי	
kindness	but with everlasting	will I have mercy	on thee saith	thy Redeemer	
H2617	H5769	H7355	H559	H1350	
יְהוָה:					
the LORD					
H3068					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 31:3 (Eternal Life): The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

1 Timothy 1:16 (Grace): Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Isaiah 60:10 (Grace): And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

Isaiah 54:10 (Grace): For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

Isaiah 55:3 (Eternal Life): Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Zechariah 1:15 (Parallel theme): And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

Isaiah 54:5 (Redemption): For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Isaiah 8:17 (References Lord): And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Isaiah 48:17 (Redemption): Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

Isaiah 47:6 (Grace): I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.