

Isaiah 57:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast
lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart?
have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me
not?

Analysis

God's rhetorical questions probe the psychology behind idolatry: "Of whom hast thou been afraid or feared?" The Hebrew *daga* (feared/anxious) suggests anxiety-driven decisions. Their lies and faithlessness stem from misplaced fear—fearing human powers more than God. "That thou hast lied and hast not remembered me" connects idolatry with both active deception (lying) and passive forgetfulness (not remembering God). "Nor laid it to thy heart" uses the Hebrew idiom for serious consideration—they never seriously reflected on their covenant obligations. God then asks, "Have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?" The long-suffering patience of God, rather than producing gratitude and repentance, emboldened them in sin. This illustrates the Reformed doctrine that God's common grace and patience, while intended to lead to repentance (Romans 2:4), can harden those who abuse it. Divine forbearance is misinterpreted as divine indifference or impotence.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, God's patience was extraordinary. Despite repeated covenant violations from the exodus onwards, He delayed judgment for centuries, sending prophets to call for repentance (2 Kings 17:13, 2 Chronicles 36:15-16). This patience was particularly evident during the divided monarchy, when God

preserved Judah despite their sins for the sake of His covenant with David (2 Kings 8:19). Rather than recognizing this forbearance as divine grace, the people presumed upon it, assuming judgment would never come (Jeremiah 7:4, Zephaniah 1:12).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the fear of man prove to be a snare in our spiritual lives (Proverbs 29:25)?
2. In what ways might we mistake God's patience for approval of our sins?
3. How should God's forbearance lead us to repentance rather than presumption?

Interlinear Text

וְיִי וְאֵת H853 H4310	דָּא גִתְּ H1672	וְתִירָאִי H3372	כִּי H3588
	And of whom hast thou been afraid	and thou fearest	
תִּכְזֹּב בִּי H3576	לֹא אֶאֱמָר H853 H3808	וְזָכַרְתָּ H2142	לֹא שָׁמַרְתָּ H3808 H7760
that thou hast lied		and hast not remembered	me nor laid
עַל לִבִּי H5921 H3820	אֲנִי הֵלֵךְ H3808 H589	מִחֲשָׁה H2814	וְיָמַי עֲלֵם H5769
it to thy heart		have not I held my peace	even of old
וְתִירָאִי H853 H3808	וְתִירָאִי H3372		
	and thou fearest		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 50:21 (Parallel theme): These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Proverbs 29:25 (Parallel theme): The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Jeremiah 3:21 (Parallel theme): A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.

Jeremiah 2:32 (Parallel theme): Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

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