

# Isaiah 57:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth:  
for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have  
made.

## Analysis

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This verse reveals God's gracious self-limitation in judgment. "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth" assures that divine wrath, though righteous, is not eternal toward His people (Psalm 103:9, Jeremiah 3:12). The Hebrew lib (contend/strive) and qatsap (be wroth) emphasize legal dispute and intense anger. God provides the reason: "for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." If God maintained perpetual wrath, His creatures would be utterly destroyed. The phrase "the spirit should fail" (ya'atof ruach) means the human spirit would faint or be overwhelmed. "The souls which I have made" emphasizes God's creative relationship with humanity—He is their Maker and thus has both authority to judge and compassion to relent. This reveals the Reformed understanding of God's covenant mercy: while His justice demands satisfaction for sin, His grace provides it through Christ. God's wrath against His elect is propitiated by Christ's substitutionary atonement, allowing His mercy to triumph over judgment (James 2:13).

## Historical Context

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This promise was fulfilled in the Babylonian exile's limited duration. Unlike Assyria's destruction of the northern kingdom (which was permanent), Judah's exile lasted only 70 years, after which a remnant returned to rebuild (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10). This demonstrated God's covenant faithfulness to preserve a remnant despite deserved judgment. Ultimately, this points to the new covenant

where God's wrath against sin is fully satisfied in Christ, removing eternal condemnation from His people (Romans 8:1).

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's self-limiting of judgment reflect His covenant mercy toward His people?
2. What does Christ's bearing of God's wrath mean for believers facing divine discipline?
3. How should understanding God's compassion as Creator affect our response to His correction?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא כִי	לְעוֹלָם	אֲרֹיב	וְלֹא	לִנְצַח		
H3588	H3808	H5769	H3808	H5331		
	for ever	For I will not contend		neither will I be always		
אֶקְצָ וְ	כִּי	רֹחַ	מִלְפָּנֶי	יֵעָט וְ	וְנַשְׁמֹת	אֲנִי
H7107	H3588	H7307	H6440	H5848	H5397	H589
wroth		for the spirit	before	should fail	me and the souls	
עָשִׂיתִי:						
which I have made						
H6213						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Micah 7:18** (Parallel theme): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

**Psalms 85:5** (Parallel theme): Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

**Hebrews 12:9** (Spirit): Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

**Jeremiah 10:24** (Parallel theme): O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

**Numbers 16:22** (Spirit): And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

**Isaiah 42:5** (Spirit): Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

**Jeremiah 38:16** (Creation): So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

**Genesis 6:3** (Spirit): And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.