

Isaiah 57:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

Analysis

God explains the reason for His wrath: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." The Hebrew *betsa* (covetousness/unjust gain) represents the root sin driving idolatry and injustice—greed and selfish ambition. This connects to the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17) and Paul's identification of covetousness as idolatry (Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 5:5). God's response was judicial: "I hid me, and was wroth." Divine hiding (*astar*) represents covenant curse—the removal of God's presence and blessing (Deuteronomy 31:17-18, Isaiah 54:8). Yet despite discipline, "he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." The Hebrew *showbab* (frowardly/backsliding) describes stubborn rebellion despite correction. This illustrates the doctrine of total depravity—natural man persists in sin even under divine discipline until God grants repentance. The phrase "the way of his heart" shows that sin flows from the heart's corruption (Mark 7:21-23, Jeremiah 17:9).

Historical Context

This describes Judah's pattern during the monarchy: God disciplined them through military defeats, famines, and prophetic warnings (Deuteronomy 28:15-68), yet they persisted in idolatry and injustice. Even Josiah's reforms were shallow and temporary (2 Kings 22-23, Jeremiah 3:10). The covetousness manifested in exploiting the poor (Isaiah 3:14-15, 5:8, Jeremiah 22:13-17) and trusting in wealth rather than God (Isaiah 2:7, Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does covetousness function as the root of idolatry in our hearts?
2. What does it reveal about our hearts when we persist in sin despite God's discipline?
3. How does God break through our stubborn hearts to bring genuine repentance?

Interlinear Text

בְּעוֹן	בְּצַע	וְאֶקְצָה	וְאָכַלְהוּ	הִסְתֵּיתִי
For the iniquity	of his covetousness	me and was wroth	and smote	him I hid
H5771	H1215	H7107	H5221	H5641
וְאֶקְצָה	וַיֵּלֶךְ	שׁוֹבָה	בְּדֶרֶךְ	לִבּוֹ
me and was wroth	and he went on	frowardly	in the way	of his heart
H7107	H3212	H7726	H1870	H3820

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 56:11 (Parallel theme): Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Jeremiah 6:13 (Parallel theme): For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

2 Peter 2:14 (Sin): Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

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