

Zechariah 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

God declares '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.' The Hebrew intensifies it: 'I am jealous with great jealousy' (qana'ti qin'ah gedolah) regarding Jerusalem, but 'with great wrath I am wrathful' (qetseph gadol ani qotsef) toward complacent nations. God's measured discipline of Israel through Babylon and others became excessive cruelty from the nations' perspective—they exceeded their mandate (Isaiah 10:5-7 shows Assyria's similar overreach). Though God used pagan nations as judgment instruments, their callous brutality and self-serving exploitation provoked His wrath. This reveals God's covenant faithfulness: He disciplines His people but defends them against those who abuse them. Romans 11:28 captures this: Israel 'as touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.'

Historical Context

Zechariah prophesied in 520 BC, during post-exilic restoration under Persian rule. Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC), but Cyrus's decree (539 BC) allowed Jews to return. By Zechariah's time, temple rebuilding had stalled, and returnees faced discouragement. Meanwhile, former oppressors (Babylon conquered by Persia, Edom displaced, Assyria long gone) lived 'at ease'—comfortable while God's people struggled. This seemed unjust to the Jews. Zechariah assures them that God hasn't forgotten: He will judge the nations that mistreated His people. Verses

16-17 promise Jerusalem's restoration. This pattern repeats: God uses pagan powers to discipline His people, then judges those powers for their cruelty (Habakkuk addresses this theodicy question).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 – Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 – The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 – Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do I reconcile God's use of wicked people as instruments while still holding them accountable?
2. Does the reality of coming judgment on oppressors comfort me to trust God's justice when evil seems triumphant?

Interlinear Text

רָאשָׁה	אָנָי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי	כִּי כִּי
H834	H589	displeased	for I was but a little			H1992	and they helped	

לבעה:

forward the affliction

H7451

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:24 (Parallel theme): And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

Isaiah 54:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Psalms 69:26 (Parallel theme): For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

Zechariah 1:11 (Parallel theme): And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

Zechariah 1:2 (Parallel theme): The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

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