

God Will Have Mercy on the Contrite and Lowly Spirit
Isaiah 57:14-21 (v.15)

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I. Historical Background

Isaiah 57:14-21 highlights God's transcendent holiness combined with His intimate desire to revive the contrite and humble. While God dwells in eternity, He stoops to heal the repentant, promising peace to those near and far. Conversely, the wicked are described as restless, having no peace, and are likened to a tossing sea. The passage calls for clearing obstacles for God's returning people, emphasizing that the high and holy God dwells with the brokenhearted to revive them, contrasting this with the unceasing turmoil of the wicked.

II. Biblical Context

Israel was divided into Northern and Southern Israel; the Northern Kingdom ruled by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom ruled by the Babylonians. Not all the Israelites were taken into captivity; many were left behind. Many of those left behind began to practice a strange mixture of pagan religious rites (2 Kings 17:24-41). When the Jewish captives finally returned, they were encouraged to adopt these pagan practices in addition to worshipping Yahweh.

Consequently, the people of God were not completely devoted to Him. Because they were guilty of backsliding into gross idolatry, they severely tried His patience and felt His punishment.

III. The Lesson: God Will Have Mercy on the Contrite and Lowly Spirit

1. **vv. 14-15.**

Rocks and stones can cause a person to trip and fall. They can also spoil a person's relationship with the Lord. The Lord

ordered their removal. In particular this means the complete removal of idol worship because this turns people away from the Lord. Exiles who were returning home from Babylon would have seen a great deal of idol worship.

There is no room in heaven for proud people. Courage and hope are God's free gifts and can not be earned. The path to getting to know, walk, and glorify God is by lowing ourselves and being contrite and humble in spirit before Him. God identifies Himself as the great and exalted One who lives forever and whose name is Holy. He created time, space matter and man. He is the High and Lofty One, who not only inhabits eternity but who lives with man. Despite the exalted magnificence and almighty splendor of the holy God, His desire is to renew a right spirit within the heart of lost souls who are dead in sin and at enmity with Him. In spite of inhabiting eternity and dwelling in high heavenly and holy places, this almighty God has chosen to live with those who are meek, lowly and humble of heart. He has chosen to redeem the penitent, revive the contrite in spirit and dwell in the hearts of all who believe in His name. God will renew the spirit of everyone who walks humbly before Him, and He will give courage to those that are crushed by the burden of sin, for He alone is the High and Lofty One who lives forever and ever.

2. **vv. 16-18.**

“For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry”. The thing to understand in getting right with God is His great love for us. Here, the Lord shows His mercy to His people but promises to relent and not be angry forever. Though God disciplined His people, He now says, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comfort to him. How will God heal the people? God will heal them by humbling them, by crushing their pride. So the healing of Isaiah 57:17 is a major heart transplant; the old hardened, proud, willful heart of stone is taken out or removed, and a new soft tender heart is put in, which is easily humbled. This is a heart that the Lofty One whose name is Holy will dwell with forever.

3. **vv. 19-21.**

Verse 19 is a message of hope, reconciliation and healing. It speaks of God's power to restore broken relationships, bring peace to His people and create praise from hearts that have been transformed. God declares His ability to create praise on the lips of His people. This is a result of His work in their hearts. When God restores and heals, the natural response is worship and gratitude. The phrase "Peace, peace, to those far and near" highlights God's desire to bring reconciliation and wholeness to all His people, whether they are physically or spiritually distant from Him. This peace is not just the absence of conflict but a deep, lasting sense of well-being and restoration in God's presence. Finally, God promise "to heal them" reinforces His commitment to mend the brokenness caused by sin, both in individual lives and in the community of His people.

The lives of the wicked are described as a restless, tossing sea that continually casts up mire and dirt, highlighting the inherent lack of inward peace, stability, and true rest for those who defy God. This passage serves as a sobering concluding contrast to the promised comfort for the repentant, affirming that peace is exclusively found in alignment with God. The reason for their loss of peace is that they have allowed sin into their lives. The good news, however, is that they can turn from their sin and repent. God is there, ready to forgive and move forward, bringing about real peace in their hearts.

Some Key Takeaways to Remember:

- a) **Humility is the key, not pride:** God dwells with the broken, not the arrogant.
- b) **God is the Healer.** He promises to restore those who have wandered, if they turn back to Him.
- c) **True peace comes from God.** Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God; without Him, the soul is restless.

IV. Conclusion: Prayer

I pray today that I will know the salvation Jesus provides, that I will turn from all sin and turn to God, that I will know the true peace of God in my life, and that I will know the forgiveness and mercy of God.