

THE CUP OF THE LORD'S FURY  
Isaiah 51:17-23

Intro: This is the second time in this chapter that we have had the words, "Awake, awake."

The first was in v. 9 which introduced Isaiah's prayer. Isaiah was calling upon God to "awake," since it seemed that He was asleep and that He did not know about the desperate need of His people.

The Lord's answer to Isaiah's prayer is given in vv. 12-16.

Now, in v. 17 the Lord was arousing Jerusalem, or Judah. The purpose is to comfort His people, as v. 19b indicates.

There are two divisions in this section, just like there were two in vv. 9-16.

The first has to do with the judgment of the people of God, in vv. 17-20; the second has to do with the judgment of the Gentiles who afflicted the people of God in Judah, in vv. 21-23.

The passage, like the first one, is eschatological--that is, it has to do with the last days. We know this because it speaks of the end of Judah's troubles.

Let me make some general observations, and then close some specific details about the passage.

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

God is righteous, and, therefore, is furious against sin wherever it appears--either among His people, or among the people of the world.

At this point His people were learning it; the heathen would learn it later. Psalm 7:11 says that

God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Heb. 13:4 says,

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

It is because God is righteous that He is angered by sin, and His anger is then expressed in judgment. That judgment is often experienced now, but the greatest and final judgment is yet to come.

This really must be our startingpoint. Cf. 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, . . ."

People like to begin and end with the love of God, but we need to start with the righteousness of God.

The second truth that stands out here is

## II. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN JUDGMENT.

- A. He is sovereign as to the order in which people are to be judged.
- B. He is sovereign as to the extent of the judgment.
- C. He is sovereign as to the nature of the judgment.

It is significant that God's judgment of His people comes first.

The Apostle Peter wrote long after Isaiah's day,  
For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 Pet. 5:17, 18).

The picture in our text seems to lump all of the judgments of the Lord's people together, but one thing is certain: the time will come when it will cease forever. But there is no such assurance given to the wicked. The one to whom the Lord gives "the cup of his fury, must take it, and drink from it until it is all gone. And they cannot give the cup back until the Lord takes it.

The judgment of God is designed to humble the Lord's people.

- 1) They are unable to stand, and they are a people who are asleep. See v. 17.
- 2) They have no guidance (v. 18a).
- 3) There is none to help her (v. 18b).
- 4) There is none to be sorry for her (v. 19a)
- 5) There is none to comfort her (v. 19b). See also v. 20.

Thus, when God moves against His people, there is no way that they can escape!

But what about the wicked?

See vv. 22b, 23. And there is no mention of any end of this judgment BECAUSE THERE IS NO END!

But notice one more point:

## III. THE LOVE OF GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE (Isa. 51:21-23).

Remember that all of this is given for the comfort of the Lord's people.

- A. His love is displayed by the revelation of His Word, in vv. 21 and the first phrase of v. 22, "Thus saith . . ."

Where would we be without the Word of God? The Word of God is primarily for the people of God.

- B. His love is displayed by the title which He has taken for Himself.

Note first, "thy Lord . . . thy God." Although the Lord may have to judge us, He will never disown us.

But what about "Lord" and "LORD" and "God"? Notice the different lettering of the words "Lord" and "LORD."

The first is Adonai,  
the second is Jehovah,  
the third is Elohim.  
He is their Owner and Master, the sovereign Lord of their lives, and their God (with omnipotence).

What limitless comfort there is in knowing this!

- C. His love is displayed by the position He holds.

He is "thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people."

If this is the Lord, with whom is He pleading the cause of His people.

Obviously it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is speaking here, and the One He pleads with is the Father.

Cf. 1 John 2:1.

To plead their cause not only means to defend them, but it means to decide a cause favorably.

What is their cause? How can the Lord defend them when they are guilty? What is a favorable outcome?

Obviously it all has to do with God's purpose in salvation. He defends them on the basis of His death. The outcome is favorable because even the judgments of God are used to promote our sanctification.

But this is not all.

- D. His love is displayed by the fact that, as the Lord said,

"Thou shalt no more drink it again."

Remember: The righteous will never have it any worse than they have it here, but the wicked will never have it better. After this life, things will be indescribably better for the child of God. After this life, things will be indescribably worse for those who are not the people of God.

One more point:

E. His love is displayed by the fact that He will judge the wicked for their treatment of the righteous.

See v. 23. See also Matt. 25:31-46.

Concl: Now the Lord never gives us an excuse for sinning. But we are to know that even our sins, while they may bring judgment even in this life, can never make the Lord give us up.

But more than that, such a revelation as this is designed by the Lord to keep us from sinning.

May we take comfort from these verses. May we find assurance here. And may this revelation of the love of God fortify us against sinning in the days to come.