

ISAIAH

Chapter 51

The LORD's Comfort for Zion

51 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. 3 For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. 4 “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. 5 My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. 7 “Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. 8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool, but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.” 9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? 10 Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? 11 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. 12 “I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, 13 and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor? 14 He who is bowed down shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the pit, neither shall his bread be lacking. 15 I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar — the LORD of hosts is his name. 16 And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people.’” 17 Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering. 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; there is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up. 19 These two things have happened to you—who will console you?—devastation and destruction, famine and sword; who will comfort you? 20 Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of the LORD, the rebuke of your God. 21 Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine: 22 Thus says your Lord, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: “Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more; 23 and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, ‘Bow down, that we may pass over’; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.”

We may think that God has spoken enough words of comfort through His prophet (40:1; 49:13). However, God knows how “slow of heart to believe” (Lk 24:25) those are “who seek the LORD” (Is 51:1), even those whom He calls “My people” (v 4) and who “know righteousness” (v 7). Therefore, in this chapter He again pleads for faith in His power to redeem. Four times He calls them to listen to Him (vv 1, 4, 7, 21). He makes the invitation attractive by variations on the theme. (TLSB)

51:1 *listen* – That is, to the God of their fathers, who now addresses them

The children of Israel had not listened to God for a long time. They had followed the gods of the people around them. Often they were the gods that were in the hills. (Ashtoreth poles) *Ashtoreths*. Female deities such as Ashtoreth (consort of Baal) and Asherah (consort of El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon). Ashtoreth was associated with the evening star and was the beautiful goddess of war and fertility. She was worshiped as Ishtar in Babylonia and as Athtart in Aram. To the Greeks she was Astarte or Aphrodite, and to the Romans, Venus. Worship of the Ashtoreths involved extremely lascivious practices (1Ki 14:24; 2Ki 23:7). (Commentary from Judges 2:13 – CSB)

Psalms 121:1 alludes to that when it says, “I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from?”

The commentary on that verse says, “*hills*. Those in the vicinity of Jerusalem, of which Mount Zion is one (125:2), or, if the plural indicates majesty (as in the Hebrew in 87:1; 133:3), Mount Zion itself. – His help and security do not come from the hills, but from the Lord who made the hills and everything else in the universe.”

There are many voices out there that are shrieking this message to us. Even many TV commercials have people literally yelling. But God comes in a “gentle whisper.”

1 Kings 19:11-12, “¹¹ The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

When we feel forsaken, when it appears that “the gates of hell” are winning worldwide, to what does our Lord direct our thoughts? He asks us to call to mind and learn, be strengthened and encouraged by the mighty deed He has done for and on behalf of His children in the past. Somehow that seems to be the last thing we turn to when troubles and difficulties come in our personal lives and in the church in general. (Counselors tell us that when people encounter problems they leave their best supports of faith, family, and friends.) How easily we forget the myriad of times the Lord brought us and His church unscathed through much worse than our present problem or trouble. (LL)

who pursue righteousness. Cf. v. 7; Dt 16:20; Pr 15:9. (CSB)

In contrast to those who trust in themselves and their do-it-yourself spirituality (50:11). (TLSB)

The word may mean imputed righteousness in the sense of being put right with God. But one need not stop short with that concept. For such imputed righteousness, if sincere, always brings with it the desire to produce ethical conduct worthy of a justified man. So we take the entire

phrase “pursue righteousness” as a description of sincere godliness, and a mark of a faithful member of God’s chosen people. (Leupold)

rock. Abraham (v. 2). Elsewhere God is called “the Rock.” (CSB)

Israel did not create itself. It came into being like stones hewn and dug from a rock vein in a quarry. (TLSB)

Abraham is the first person overtly credited in Scripture with “righteousness” through faith alone (Gen. 15:6). This is one reason Yahweh points people to consider the patriarch. He instructs them to recall their past and return to the roots of their faith, the “rock” and “quarry” from which they came. His promises of grace to Abraham formed the bedrock upon which Israel was first built, and Sarah was the cavity from which Israel was born. (CC)

We are not left to vague guesses as to what the call has in mind, for verse 2 gives the official interpretation. (Leupold)

By faith we are also descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). We are cut from the same rock, the same quarry. When our world seems barren and without hope, remember how God fulfilled His promises. He will not fail to fulfill all of them, even if it may appear impossible. (PBC)

5:2 *was but one.* See Ge 12:1; Eze 33:24. (CSB)

Abraham, “as good as dead,” became many when “by faith Sarah ... received power to conceive” (Rm 4:19; Heb 11:11–12; cf Ac 7:5). (TLSB)

The prospects of developing into a nation were most unlikely. (Leupold)

Romans 4:16-19, “¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”^c He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. ¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.”

The Lord directs His people to return to the story of Abraham and Sarah. Both of them left their homeland and traveled to a far distant land because God invited them to go and promised great things. (PBC)

called. Chosen by God. (TLSB)

bless him and multiply him. The barrenness of Israel’s three matriarchs, Sarah (Gn 11:30), Rebekah (Gn 25:21), and Rachel (Gn 29:31), highlight the fact that the Lord chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1Co 1:27–28). (TLSB)

51:3 *Zion.* Envisioned as both place and person (60:14; ch 62). (TLSB)

comforts. Other promises of paradise restored are in 4:2; 32:15; 35:1–2; 61:3–4; 65:21–22 (cf Rv 21–22). (TLSB)

The whole process is comprehended in the one term “comfort,” which includes feeling sorry for the one in need and also administering help. Echoes of 40:1 ring out rather clearly at this point. (Leupold)

wilderness *like Eden.* See 35:1–2. The contrast between the lush splendor of Eden and the barrenness of the desert is found also in Joel 2:3. Cf. Ge 2:8, 10. (CSB)

More than merely returning to Jerusalem of the past, the restoration will be like the perfection of Eden. Israel will be once again a well-tended garden (cf Is 5:1–2). (TLSB)

In 32:15-18, Isaiah describes Yahweh’s gift of the Spirit transforming the land. The wilderness, useful only for pasturing sheep, will be changed into a place where fruit trees will grow (cf. 29:17; 41:19). The outpouring of the Spirit accompanies the bestowal of flowing streams of water in 44:3 and has baptismal overtones (cf. Ezek. 36:24-27). In this verse the prophet furthers this idea that the waste, desert, and desolate places will be replaced with joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and the sound of music. Israel’s election is related intrinsically to the possession in the land (e.g., Deut. 4:37-38) so that if Israel is not dwelling permanently in the land, then its election has apparently been rendered meaningless. On the other hand, to be elected once again means to be brought in and settled in the land...once again. Yahweh will reverse the curse (cf. Neh. 13:2). (CC)

A colorful figure is resorted to. Israel in Captivity is thought of as a waste land, whose desolation is to be brought to an end, so that what was like a waste now will be like the famous paradise of days of old before man’s calamitous fall into sin. (Leupold)

Joy and gladness. Joy and gladness will again be found because of the transformation that is to take place. And the response on Israel’s part will be “thanksgiving and sounds of praise.” This last part could be reminiscent of Jeremiah 30:19. (Leupold)

Jeremiah 30:19, “From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained.”

51:4-6 – It may be remarked that this section contains a number of expressions that are clearly echoes of the Servant passages. (Leupold)

Cf 42:1–4; 49:6. The Lord will send His Servant to bestow these gifts. The Lord comes to His waiting people, not the other way around. Note the terms set parallel here: “law,” “justice,” “light,” “righteousness,” “salvation,” and “My arms.” (TLSB)

51:4 *give attention* – The Lord is about to make a solemn pronouncement to which He wants His people to give strict attention. (Leupold)

kawshab – To perk up one’s ears and pay close attention to what is about to be said. To hold the coming message in high regard.

Give ear to me, my nation – God is deeply concerned for the future of His own. Israel is the basis of all development but what is developed there is for the people generally. (Leupold)

awzan – To expand or broaden out one’s ear so as to take in everything that is said. All growth and development is to begin with instruction from the Lord.

law ... my justice. † The rule of the servant would bring justice. (CSB)

In the OT era, the coastlands largely waited in vain for Yahweh’s teaching to go forth from Israel (cf. 42:4). The nation’s idolatry stifled its witness to the world (42:19; 18:1). Therefore, the teaching will go forth directly from Yahweh (cf. Is. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3) through his loyal Servant. They share in the same mission (cf. Jn. 10:30). But as the Servant seeks to establish Yahweh’s will, he encounters serious setbacks (Is. 50:4-11), and his mission ends in a death with the wicked (52:13-53:12). However, his interment (53:9) on Good Friday does not mean the end; he arises victorious on Easter (52:13; 53:12). The risen Servant sends forth his “servants” in mission. (CC)

Heaven and earth will pass away but the Lord’s kingdom will endure forever. All growth and development is to begin with “instruction” that Israel gets as to the big issues involved. (Leupold)

torah – This is the Pentateuch which includes both Law and Gospel.

mishpat – A verdict or sentence. In this case the word comprises both “justification” (God’s “justice – undeserved grace or salvation) and “sanctification,” a norm of behavior corresponding to God’s norm. God’s justice is salvation by grace through faith in the Christ’s death and resurrection.

light to the peoples. The servant is the light in 42:6; 49:6. (CSB)

God’s Word and restoration are not restricted to Israel but will touch a wide range of nations. (TLSB)

The light kindled in Israel will throw its kindly beams for people the world over. (Leupold)

ore – Illumination like daylight or sun shine. Jesus is that light that is to be shared with all people. The light kindled for Israel’s use will also throw light beams to people all over the world.

Isaiah 42:6 “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”

Isaiah 49:6 “he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

51:5 *righteousness draws near.* In the deliverance from exile. Ultimately, salvation through Christ will come to all nations. See 46:13 and note – (righteousness is equivalent to salvation). (CSB)

He will powerfully divide the righteous from the wicked (cf Mt 25:31–46). (TLSB)

If Yahweh is committed to the restoration of his people, what will he do about the sin that precipitated Israel's apostasy, idolatry, and exile? He will commission Cyrus to conquer Israel's conqueror Babylon (Is. 47), but how will he save Israel? The Suffering Servant is Yahweh's answer. He embodies Yahweh's arm (53:1). "Righteousness" and "Salvation" come through this mighty "arm" (51:5). Through this loyal Servant, God restores Israel and brings enduring salvation also to the Gentiles. (CC)

The word righteousness is translated "victory," a possibility that cannot be reproduced in English. All this is spoken of in the perfect tense, for it all refers to things that have as good happened. (Leupold)

tsehdek – Legal equity and prosperity. This is forensic righteousness as declared by God and not earned by us. Ultimately it is the salvation which we have through Jesus.

Isaiah 46:13 "I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel."

arms. Symbolizes power. (CSB)

God's successful overall rule could hardly be described more simply and clearly than in the words "my arm." All issues of history lie in the hollow of God's hand. (Leupold)

zeroaw - It illustrates mighty power, strength and help for those who need it.

Exodus 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.'"

Numbers 11:21-23, ²¹ But Moses said, "Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!' ²² Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?" ²³ The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

coastlands. The coastlands and islands of the Mediterranean are probably intended. (CSB)

hope. Trust in or look expectantly. (CSB)

Ultimately these benefits will accrue to all nations. The nations themselves in the secrets of their heart wait for the time when they will have a share in these blessings. (Leupold)

51:6 *Lift ... to the heavens.* See 40:26. (CSB)

This is the third time in the chapter that Yahweh commands the captives to “look confidently” in faith (see also 51:1-2). He is repeating an earlier direction to Abram (Gen. 15:5). (CC)

Isaiah 40:26, “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

Amazing, isn't it! According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, “with large telescopes astronomers can photograph over thirty billion stars. And we think there must be billions more beyond the reach of our most powerful telescopes.” Not only is He able to name each one but also brings out each one every night.

nawsaw – Lift to lofty place.

Isaiah 40:26 “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

vanish like smoke. Disturbances in the heavens characterize the day of the Lord. (CSB)

sky ... scroll ... starry host will fall.† Referred to in Mt 24:29 in connection with the second coming of Christ.). (CSB)

The Lord invites His people to consider things that seem unalterably fixed and sure – the heavens above and the earth beneath. Nothing appears to be more stable than these works of the Lord's hands. But they are not among the things that endure to all eternity. (Leupold)

earth will wear out like a garment. See 24:4; Heb 1:10–11; cf. Isa 50:9. (CSB)

Neither creation nor the enemies of God's people are eternal. The material world is transitory, but the Word of the Lord “will not pass away” (Mt 24:35; cf Mt 5:18). (TLSB)

The dwellers upon the earth will share in the same lot in the great judgment, perishing like swarms of gnats, in a merciless and total judgment, many though they may be at the time the judgment takes place. (Leupold)

my salvation - yeshooaw – To be saved from something or delivered and experience victory. (QV)

Yahweh's comments about the transitory nature of creation contrast with his everlasting salvation and righteousness. These gifts will never fail (Ps. 102:25-27), quoted in Heb. 1:10-12). If creation may appear to be stable and lasting, even more is Yahweh's plan to save Israel. Even if the heavens and earth dissipate, his love will never cease (cf. Jer. 31:35-36; Mk. 13:31). (CC)

will be forever.† See v. 8; 45:17. God will be faithful to all of his promises. The word of God will also endure forever (CSB)

Contrast is similar to that in Is 40:6–8. The salvation and righteousness of the Lord will never fail. (TLSB)

Another way of saying this is, “my victory shall never be annulled.” (Leupold)

God is faithful to all his promises. His word will not pass away, even though everything else will (Matthew 24:35).

Isaiah 45:17 “But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.”

my righteousness - tse-daw-kaw – This is a rightness that has to do with justice, objectivity and virtue.

Will never be dismayed – The word fail is chathath and means to break down or be abolished. This phrase is saying that God’s righteousness will not ever fail or be lost.

51:7 *who know righteous.* They were not only informed how and why they were to be right with God, but this law or teaching was also in their heart, motivating and shaping their lives. (TLSB)

people in whose heart is my law. See Ps 37:31; Jer 31:33. (CSB)

While all people have the Law written in their hearts, not all recognize its presence and the God who wrote it. (TLSB)

reproach ... dismay. Such as those borne by the servant in 50:6–7. (CSB)

Here the Spirit speaks with deep emotion, because those who believe and publicly confess the Word and heartily agree with the law of God are attacked by Satan to such an extent that before the world he defiles them, torments them, blasphemes them, snatches them for torture, and drives them to be burned. But here God promises to be in His own for the purpose of testing and confirming the Word, which those who have caused the danger knew. (Luther)

51:8 *moth ... like a garment.* Here the Spirit speaks with deep emotion, because those who believe and publicly confess the Word and heartily agree with the law of God are attacked by Satan to such an extent that before the world he defiles them, torments them, blasphemes them, snatches them for torture, and drives them to be burned. But here God promises to be in His own for the purpose of testing and confirming the Word, which those who have caused the danger knew. (Luther)

righteousness will last forever – In spite of all the ungodly. Because the Word will stand forever, its victory is forever, whereas they will meanwhile be scattered like stubble. (Luther)

51:9 *Awake.* It appears to those crying that the Lord is asleep, insensitive to their calling. (TLSB)

put on strength. Lit. “exchange.” Their weakness will give way to God’s strength (v. 29). The Hebrew for this verb is used of changes of clothes (Ge 35:2; Jdg 14:12), which can

symbolize strength and beauty (Isa 52:1). Paul tells believers to clothe themselves with Christ (Ro 13:14; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). (CSB)

arm of the LORD. Symbol of God's power (cf. v. 5). (CSB)

A cry to the Lord to act with His strong arm. It is a cry of faith that He can and will act as He did before. (TLSB)

days of old. Refers primarily to the exodus. (TLSB)

Rahab ... monster. Egypt. (CSB)

51:10 *sea.* The Red Sea. (CSB)

Red Sea, which the Lord parted for the Israelites. (TLSB)

51:11 This verse is the same as 35:10. (CSB)

Answer of prayer of "the redeemed" (vv. 9-10) comes "while they are yet speaking" (65:24). (TLSB)

joy shall be upon their heads – Both blessings and blame were bestowed on the head with the laying on of hands. The head (and face) identified an individual. The faces of the redeemed would express the joy they received. (TLSB)

51:12 *who comforts.* He revives our hearts so that they may contemplate the very God who speaks such great words of comfort, and though according to the feeling of the flesh that "little while" (John 16:16) seems endless, as in the case of Job, we must nevertheless persevere. Jacob would not have believed that his son, lost and wretchedly destroyed, was reigning in Egypt. But when he knew it to be true, he was overwhelmed with an unspeakable joy. This is characteristic of a comforting paragraph, because when Christians believe, they speak; but if they speak, they become speechless. This is always the result, because the world and hell cannot hear the preaching of the Word. (Luther)

grass. As antagonist God must view the strength of the destroyer as ridiculously small. (Leupold)

51:13 *the LORD, your Maker.* While God is the merciful comforter, Israel should remember that He is also the almighty Maker, their Lord far above them. (TLSB)

stretched out the heavens and ... earth. The word and the meaning are two things. Nature is more affected by the senses and abhors the word. Hence He strives to impress comfort on souls in affliction, because He is Himself God, the Comforter, even from a land as far away as Egypt. This should lead them to contemplate the deliverances of the past, those consolations and powerful deliverances. (Luther)

wrath of the oppressor. Babylon's wrath was insignificant beside the mighty wrath of God (cf. 13:3, 5; 30:27). (CSB)

51:14 *be released.* The exiles in Babylon. (CSB)

the pit. Prisoners will not die in an oppressive dungeon. (TLSB)

his bread. Even hunger will be satisfied. (TLSB)

51:15 *stirs up the sea.* Cf. Job 26:12; Ps 107:25; Jer 31:35. (CSB)

Image emphasizes distinction proposed in vv 10–11 (cf Jb 26:12; Ps 107:25). (TLSB)

LORD of hosts. These examples serve to comfort us and refresh our memory. Frequent mention is made of these things in the psalms. (Luther)

51:16 *my words.*† The message of salvation kept alive in Israel. Like the servant of 49:2, the people are responding to God’s word (cf. 59:21; Jos 1:8). (CSB)

In 49:2, the Servant’s “mouth” is “made ... like a sharp sword” as God’s spokesman. He is also promised divine protection. Both the Servant-Redeemer and Israel, the servant to be redeemed, play a part in God’s plan of salvation. Both are given the title “servant.” God redeemed and preserved Israel so that the Servant could say, “Salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22). (TLSB)

shadow of my hand. As a wall of protection. (TLSB)

“You will deliver many from chains and Satan’s prison and recall them to life from death through the Word. Nevertheless, you will defend from the torment of the devil only if in the first place you fix yourself surely in the Word and do not hesitate. If My Word will be in your mouth, the protection of My hands will most surely follow, because the Word preached apart from affliction cannot make its way. Thus I will protect you so that you will not succumb.” (Luther)

establishes the heavens ... earth. Zion is the heaven of heavens. Zion is the new earth founded in the Spirit, so that I might do My works through you.” Hence the old man is in the old world. But the church of the faithful is called a spiritual microcosm, where the new man lives who is ruled by the Word, which is not brought to us by an angel or out of the clouds but is made active through our mouth and our voice through the sound of the apostles that has gone out to all the earth (cf. Rom. 10:18). So great is the power of the Word. (Luther)

51:17 *stand up.* People of Israel had called out to the Lord in vv 9–11, but now the Lord turns the tables. It was not He who was sleeping but they. (TLSB)

cup of his wrath. Experiencing God’s judgment is often compared to becoming drunk on strong wine. It is the fate of wicked nations in particular. See 29:9; 63:6; Ps 60:3; 75:8; Jer 25:15–16; La 4:21; Eze 23:32–34; Hab 2:16; Zec 12:2; cf. Jn 18:11. (CSB)

The devastating effects and injuries that came with drunkenness (Pr 23:29–35) illustrated the devastating effects of God’s wrath. The cup from the Lord was too much for them to bear (29:9; 63:6; Ps 75:8; Lm 4:21; Ezk 23:32–34; Ob 16; Hab 2:16; Rv 14:10), causing their sons to faint or fall down drunk. (TLSB)

dregs. Sediment of the grapes, which settles to the bottom of the container Cup of God’s wrath will give them their fill of idolatrous self-destruction. *bowl.* Hbr term appears on a bronze Phoenician bowl, discovered at Megiddo. This Phoenician drinking bowl was associated with a Marzeah feast (cf Am 6:3–6) in honor of Melqart (Phoenician god) and Shamash (Babylonian god). (TLSB)

51:18 Children were expected to take care of parents who were sick or unsteady. (CSB)

Leaders of Jerusalem were gone. (TLSB)

51:19 *two things*. Described by the following words. (TLSB)

devastation and destruction, famine and sword. First pair (abstract) is explained by second pair (concrete). (TLSB)

who will comfort you? A question also asked in Jer 15:5. Contrast v. 3. (CSB)

It is as if he were saying: “Those who are most ungodly and clearly materialistic in the world ought to be experiencing such things, and the godly should be spared.” Yet our devastators carry on in peace and affluence while they are busy mocking us. (Luther)

51:20 *fainted*. Drunk on God’s wrath (v 17). (TLSB)

in a net. Cf. Pr 7:22. (CSB)

Noble, wary antelope, though nearly impossible to shoot or chase down with horses, could be fooled by snares. (TLSB)

rebuke. See 17:13; 54:9; 66:15. (CSB)

51:21 *afflicted*. Jerusalem (see 54:11). (CSB)

are drunk. On God’s wrath. (CSB)

The forsaken one shall not be abandoned. The drunkard shall not be drunk. The weak shall not be weak, and the killed person shall not be put to death, because His Word provides healing. (Luther)

51:22 *cup of staggering*. “Behold, I will take the cup of drunkenness from his hand; you will not drink further. Once you have drunk the dregs down to the last drops, you will drink no more. They who have humiliated you will in their turn be forced to drain the cup. As for you, the church, it will no longer be called the cup of wrath, but it will be left to your tormentors and enemies, who refuse the proffered peace, yes, even rage and boil in their resistance and persecution.” (Luther)

51:23 *your tormentors*. The Babylonians. See vv. 13–14; 14:4. (CSB)

your back like the ground. Perhaps figurative, but cf. Jos 10:24. (CSB)

Conquerors stepped over the prostate bodies of their victims and humiliated prisoners who had to bow. (TLSB)

Ch 51 The Lord pleads for the people to believe in His salvation and describes the misery of living under His wrath. Unrepentance lulls us into spiritual sloth, so that we do not discern the Lord’s purposes in view of His Word. Wake up and listen! The Redeemer calls daily, and His

mercies are new each morning. • Draw near, O Lord, and remove the cup of wrath from my hand.
Replace it with the new cup of Christ's blood. Amen. (TLSB)