

Job 11:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.

Analysis

Zophar misrepresents Job's claims. Job never said his 'doctrine' (תֹּלְךָ, leqach—teaching, instruction) was pure or that he was 'clean' (בָּרָךְ, bar—pure, innocent) in God's eyes. Job acknowledged human sinfulness (7:21, 9:2-3) while maintaining he hadn't committed sins warranting his suffering. This is classic straw-man argumentation—Zophar attacks a position Job never held. The verse warns against eisegesis—reading into another's words what we expect or want to hear. Reformed theology's emphasis on careful exegesis applies not only to Scripture but to charitable listening to others.

Historical Context

Ancient legal disputes required accurate representation of an opponent's position. Zophar's mischaracterization would have been recognized as rhetorical manipulation, yet it often succeeds in group settings where the accused cannot adequately defend themselves.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How often do we argue against what we think someone believes rather than what they actually said?
2. What safeguards can prevent us from misrepresenting others' positions in theological disputes?

Interlinear Text

בְּעִינֵּיכְנָה תְּזַהַּר וְבָרְכָתְךָ יְהִי לְקַדְמָתְךָ
For thou hast said is pure My doctrine and I am clean in thine eyes
H559 H2134 H3948 H1249 H1961 H5869

Additional Cross-References

Job 10:7 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.

Job 6:10 (Parallel theme): Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.