

Job 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

Analysis

The friends' inability to recognize Job demonstrates the severity of his disfigurement. Their actions—lifting their voices weeping, tearing their robes, sprinkling dust on their heads—represent genuine covenant mourning. The seven days and nights of silence reveal proper pastoral care: presence precedes pronouncement. Unfortunately, this wise silence will soon give way to false accusations, showing that even those who begin well can fail without maintaining humble dependence on God's wisdom.

Historical Context

Seven days of mourning was a standard period (Genesis 50:10, 1 Samuel 31:13), and sitting with mourners without speaking was culturally appropriate, acknowledging that some grief transcends words.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How well do you practice the ministry of presence without feeling compelled to speak?
2. What causes people who begin with genuine compassion to shift into accusation and false counsel?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשְׁאֶלְתִּי	אֶת	עֵינֵיכֶם	מִרְחָזָק	הַפְּנֵי	הַזֶּה	וְלֹא	מִרְחָזָק
And when they lifted up	H853	their eyes	H5869	afar off	H3808	and knew	H5234
	H5375		H1058		H7167		H4598
וַיִּשְׁאֶלְתִּי	מִעַל	אֶל	לִבְכָּרְעוֹן	וְלֹא	אֶל	מִעַל	וְלֹא
And when they lifted up	their voice	and wept	and they rent	every one	his mantle		
H5375	H6963	H1058	H7167	H376	H4598		
וְלֹא	עַל	עַפְרָה	עַל	בְּשָׂמִים	בְּשָׂמִים	וְלֹא	תִּזְרַק
and sprinkled	dust	H5921	upon their heads	toward heaven	H8064		
H2236	H6083		H7218				

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 27:30 (Parallel theme): And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes:

Lamentations 2:10 (Parallel theme): The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

Nehemiah 9:1 (Parallel theme): Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

Job 1:20 (Parallel theme): Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

Joshua 7:6 (Parallel theme): And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

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