

Job 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Analysis

Job scraping himself with a potsherd (broken pottery) while sitting among ashes depicts complete abasement. The ash heap was both the city dump and a place of mourning/repentance. The imagery suggests Job is treating himself as refuse, yet this self-abasement paradoxically positions him for God's eventual vindication (compare James 4:10). His action demonstrates that faith perseveres even when suffering strips away all dignity and comfort.

Historical Context

Sitting in ashes was a standard Ancient Near Eastern practice expressing deep mourning or repentance. The use of a potsherd to scrape the skin provided some relief from itching while also serving as a visible sign of affliction.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. When suffering strips away your dignity, how do you maintain faith?
2. What does Job's posture of abasement teach us about the path to eventual vindication?

Interlinear Text

וְאָבִיו לְזִקְנָתָה
And he took him a potsherd to scrape

H3947 H2789 H1623 H0 H1931

וְשָׁב בְּתוּךְ פָּאָרֶת
himself withal and he sat down among the ashes

H3427 H8432 H665

Additional Cross-References

Job 42:6 (Parallel theme): Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Jonah 3:6 (Parallel theme): For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

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:

Matthew 11:21 (Parallel theme): Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Isaiah 61:3 (Parallel theme): To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Psalms 38:5 (Parallel theme): My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

Psalms 38:7 (Parallel theme): For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.

Jeremiah 6:26 (Parallel theme): O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

2 Samuel 13:19 (Parallel theme): And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

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