

Job 21:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken,
mock on.

Analysis

Suffer me that I may speak (שָׁאוּנִי וְאַנְכִּי אֲדַבֵּר, se'uni ve-anokhi adabber)—Job demands a hearing from his accusers. The verb nasa (נָסָה) means to bear, carry, or endure, suggesting Job is asking his friends to bear with him patiently. This introduces his devastating counterargument to their retribution theology.

After that I have spoken, mock on—Job's bitter irony shows his awareness that no amount of evidence will convince his friends. The imperative "mock" (לִּצְחֹק, la'ag) will recur when Job describes how the wicked mock God without consequences (21:14-15). Job invites continued mockery because he knows the facts of wicked prosperity will speak louder than theological platitudes. This verse frames chapters 21-22: Job will present evidence that contradicts his friends' theology, knowing they'll reject it anyway.

Historical Context

Job 21 marks the conclusion of the second dialogue cycle. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have repeatedly insisted that suffering always results from sin and prosperity always follows righteousness. Job's friends represent conventional ancient Near Eastern wisdom—divine justice operates according to strict moral causation. Job's upcoming argument (verses 7-34) will systematically dismantle this theology by observing that the wicked often prosper without divine punishment, a scandalous claim in his cultural context.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. When have you found yourself presenting truth to people who refuse to hear it? How did Job's approach of speaking truth despite knowing it would be rejected apply?
2. How does Job's willingness to speak uncomfortable truths challenge our tendency to avoid confrontation even when truth is at stake?
3. What does Job's sarcasm reveal about honest communication with God and others during suffering?

Interlinear Text

שֹׁכֵחַ אֹנִי	וְאֶנֶכִּי	דֹּבֵר	וְאַחֲרָי	דֹּבֵר	תִּלְעִיג:
Suffer		me that I may speak	and after	me that I may speak	mock on
H5375	H595	H1696	H310	H1696	H3932

Additional Cross-References

Job 17:2 (Parallel theme): Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?

Job 16:10 (Parallel theme): They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me.

Job 16:20 (Parallel theme): My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.

