

Job 22:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

Analysis

Eliphaz counsels Job: "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up." The Hebrew *banah* (בָּנָה, "built up") evokes construction and restoration—a rebuilding of Job's fortunes. The conditional "if" assumes Job has departed from God, requiring repentance. Eliphaz's theology contains truth: genuine repentance does lead to restoration. Yet he errs in assuming Job's suffering proves Job's sin. Reformed theology distinguishes between

1. suffering as judgment for specific sins (David and Bathsheba)
2. suffering as fatherly discipline (Hebrews 12:6),
3. suffering as mysterious providence for God's purposes (Job, Joseph).

Eliphaz's counsel would be appropriate for category (1) but fails to recognize Job's situation as category (3). This highlights the danger of universal application of particular biblical principles without wisdom to discern contexts.

Historical Context

The promise of restoration upon repentance was central to covenant theology (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, Jeremiah 29:12-14). Israel's exile and restoration patterns reinforced this. However, the post-exilic period raised new questions when faithful Jews suffered under foreign oppression despite covenant faithfulness. Job addresses this tension: what when the restoration formula doesn't apply because the sufferer hasn't departed from God?

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can we discern whether suffering calls for repentance, patient endurance, or some other response?
2. What dangers arise when we apply biblical promises of restoration without considering their specific contexts?
3. How does Job's experience prepare us for Jesus' teaching that suffering isn't always proportional to sin (John 9:1-3)?

Interlinear Text

אָם H518	תָּשׁוּב H7725	עַד H5704	לְשׁוֹמֵר H7706	תִּבְנֶה H1129	תִּרְחֹק H7368
	If thou return		to the Almighty	thou shalt be built up	far
עַל H5766	מִמְּקוֹמֶיךָ H168				
iniquity	from thy tabernacles				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:3 (Parallel theme): Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Acts 26:20 (Parallel theme): But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Colossians 2:7 (Parallel theme): Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Jude 1:20 (Parallel theme): But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

2 Timothy 2:19 (Sin): Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

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