

Job 23:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Analysis

Job's testimony reaches devotional heights: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food (chukqi, 'צֶדֶק)." The noun choq refers to that which is decreed or prescribed—Job's portion, his daily sustenance. The verb tsaphan (צָפַן, "esteemed") means to treasure, hide, or store up. Job hasn't merely valued God's word intellectually—he has treasured it as more essential than physical nourishment. This anticipates Christ's declaration, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Reformed spirituality emphasizes that Scripture is not merely informative but formative—the means by which God sustains spiritual life. Job's devotion to God's word despite his suffering demonstrates that true faith persists not because circumstances validate our theology, but because God's word itself is self-authenticating truth. This is the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum—the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit confirming Scripture's authority regardless of external circumstances.

Historical Context

Ancient Israel's relationship with Torah was covenantal and personal, not merely legal. Psalm 1, 19, and 119 celebrate Torah as delight, not burden. Job's claim to treasure God's words recalls Deuteronomy 8:3, where God fed Israel manna to teach that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD." For an ancient audience where food security was

precarious, Job's claim was radical—he prioritized eternal truth over physical survival.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does our actual time in Scripture compared to time pursuing physical needs reveal what we truly treasure?
2. What does Job's devotion to God's word despite unanswered questions teach about the nature of faith?
3. How does Jesus' use of this principle in His temptation (Matthew 4:4) illuminate the spiritual battle we face?

Interlinear Text

מִצְוַת	שֶׁ פִּתִּי	וְלֹא אֶ	אָנֹכִי יָשׁ
from the commandment	of his lips	H3808	Neither have I gone back
H4687	H8193		H4185
יֵה חֵקִי	אֶצְפֶּנִּי	אֲמָרִי	פִּי:
more than my necessary	I have esteemed	the words	of his mouth
H2706	H6845	H561	H6310

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 15:16 (Word): Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Psalms 119:103 (Word): How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

John 4:34 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Psalms 119:11 (Word): Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Job 22:22 (Word): Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.

John 8:31 (Word): Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

John 4:32 (Parallel theme): But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

Psalms 119:127 (Word): Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

Job 6:10 (Word): 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.

Acts 14:22 (Parallel theme): Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.