

Job 23:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

Analysis

Job declares God's sovereignty: "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." The phrase "in one" (be'echad, בְּאֶחָד) means unique, alone, unchangeable. The verb shuv (שׁוּב, "turn") means to cause to return or change direction. Job affirms divine immutability—God's purposes cannot be thwarted. The phrase "what his soul desireth" (nephsho avah, נַפְשׁוֹ אָוָה) expresses God's will and pleasure. From a Reformed perspective, this articulates divine sovereignty and immutability: God's decrees are unchanging and His will is irresistible. Yet Job speaks this with anguish, not comfort—he fears God's will includes his destruction. This reveals the tension between affirming sovereignty and trusting goodness. The doctrine of God's sovereignty terrifies if we doubt His goodness but comforts when we trust His love. Romans 8:28 resolves Job's dilemma: God's unchangeable will works all things for good to those who love Him.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern religions depicted gods as capricious and changeable—needing appeasement, capable of being manipulated by magic or offerings. Job's affirmation of divine immutability distinguished Yahweh from such deities. Malachi 3:6 declares, "I am the LORD, I change not." This theological conviction grounds covenant reliability—God keeps promises because His character and purposes are unchanging.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's unchanging nature provide both solemnity (His justice is certain) and comfort (His promises are sure)?
2. What is the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom in Reformed theology?
3. How can we trust God's unchanging will when, like Job, we don't understand His purposes?

Interlinear Text

וְהוּא	בְּאֶחָד	וְיָי	יָשִׁיב נֹו	וְנַפְשׁוֹ
H1931	But he is in one	H4310	mind and who can turn	him and what his soul
	H259		H7725	H5315
אֶתְּ הַ	יַעֲשֶׂה:			
desireth	even that he doeth			
H183	H6213			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 115:3 (Parallel theme): But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Proverbs 19:21 (Parallel theme): There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Daniel 4:35 (Parallel theme): And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the

inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Isaiah 46:10 (Parallel theme): Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Job 12:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 (Parallel theme): I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Psalms 135:6 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 (Parallel theme): That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

Job 34:29 (Parallel theme): When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:

Romans 9:19 (Parallel theme): Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?