

Job 29:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

Analysis

The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me (birkat obed בָּרְכַת אָבֶד, blessing of the perishing)—those on death's doorstep blessed Job because his intervention saved them. Obed (אָבֶד) means perishing, dying, being destroyed—desperate people at the extremity. Job's justice and generosity literally kept them alive, and their grateful blessings returned to him. **And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy** (leb almanah לֶב אַלְמָנָה, heart of widow; ranan רָנָן, to sing, cry out, shout for joy)—Job brought joy to the most vulnerable.

Widows epitomized powerlessness in ancient society, lacking male protection and economic support. The verb ranan depicts exuberant celebration, not quiet contentment—Job's care transformed grief into joy. This theme runs throughout Scripture: God defends widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 68:5, 146:9), and true religion involves caring for them (James 1:27). Job's defense of the vulnerable demonstrates righteousness that pleased God, yet this very righteousness intensifies his theological crisis—why would God afflict one who so faithfully reflected divine character? The widow's singing contrasts sharply with Job's later lament and his wife's counsel to 'curse God and die' (Job 2:9). Job gave others reason to sing; now he finds none himself.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern widows faced severe economic vulnerability. Without inheritance rights and unable to work most professions, widows depended on

family or community charity. Israelite law specifically protected widows (Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 24:17-21), and prophets condemned their exploitation (Isaiah 1:23, 10:2). Job's care for widows predated Mosaic law yet embodied its spirit, demonstrating universal moral law written on human hearts (Romans 2:14-15). His generosity created a social safety net in his community, making his own subsequent abandonment by former friends particularly bitter.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How actively do you seek out opportunities to help those 'ready to perish' who have no claim on you?
2. What does Job's care for widows teach about measuring righteousness by treatment of the powerless rather than the powerful?
3. How does Job's experience of blessing the vulnerable yet receiving suffering challenge simplistic views of divine justice?

Interlinear Text

בָּרַכְתָּ
The blessing of him that was ready to perish
H1293

אֲבֹד
H6

וְלֹא בָּרַךְתָּ
H5921

אֲבֹד
came heart
H935 H3820

אֶלְמַתְנָה
upon me and I caused the widow's to sing for joy
H490 H7442

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 27:13 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Job 22:9 (Parallel theme): Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

Philemon 1:7 (Parallel theme): For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

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