

Job 33:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

Analysis

Elihu describes God's merciful intervention in human judgment. The subject 'he' likely refers to God, though some interpret it as the mediating angel from verse 23. The verb **וַיַּחַנֵּן** (vayhunnennu, 'and He is gracious') comes from **חָנָן** (chanan), meaning to show favor or mercy—undeserved compassion. This grace precedes the deliverance, indicating God's initiative in salvation. The command **פְּדֹעַהוּ** (peda'ehu, 'deliver him') uses the language of redemption, literally 'ransom him'—purchasing freedom from bondage or death.

The phrase **מִרְדַּת שָׁחָת** (meredet shachat, 'from going down to the pit') refers to Sheol, the grave, or death itself—the descent every human faces. Most significant is the declaration **מִצְאָתִי כּוֹפֵר** (matzati chofer, 'I have found a ransom'). The word **כּוֹפֵר** (kofer) means 'ransom price' or 'atonement'—the payment that satisfies justice and secures release. This verse remarkably anticipates the New Testament doctrine of substitutionary atonement, where Christ serves as the ransom (Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6). The verb 'found' suggests searching and discovery—God Himself provides the solution to humanity's death sentence, demonstrating the gospel principle centuries before Christ.

Historical Context

Job, likely the oldest book in Scripture (possibly patriarchal period, 2000-1800 BC), addresses suffering's profound questions. Elihu, the youngest of Job's dialogue partners, speaks in chapters 32-37 after Job's three friends exhaust their

arguments. Unlike them, Elihu isn't directly rebuked by God (Job 42:7), suggesting his words contain more truth. The concept of a 'ransom' for life was understood in ancient cultures—prisoners of war, slaves, or those under death sentence could be freed if someone paid the required price. In Israel's sacrificial system, animals served as substitutes, foreshadowing the ultimate ransom in Christ. Elihu's words point to God's initiative in salvation—He provides the ransom, demonstrating the gospel principle that God Himself solves the problem of human sin and death.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the concept of God finding a 'ransom' relate to Christ's work on the cross?
2. What does it mean that God is 'gracious'—how does grace differ from justice or mercy?
3. Why is a ransom necessary—what debt or obligation does it satisfy?
4. How does Elihu's teaching about divine deliverance challenge the arguments of Job's other friends?
5. In what ways does this verse anticipate New Testament redemption theology?

Interlinear Text

וְיִמְכֶּלֶת	וַיֹּאמֶר	בְּדִיעָהוּ	בְּדִיעָהוּ	מִן־דַּת	שְׁמַת
Then he is gracious	unto him and saith	Deliver	him from going down	to the pit	
H2603	H559	H6308	H3381		H7845

כִּפְרָה: מֵצָא אֶתְּנִי
I have found a ransom

H4672 H3724

Additional Cross-References

Job 33:18 (Parallel theme): He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Matthew 20:28 (Redemption): Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Job 22:21 (Parallel theme): Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.

Exodus 33:19 (Grace): And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Zechariah 9:11 (Parallel theme): As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

1 Timothy 2:6 (Redemption): Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Hosea 14:4 (Parallel theme): I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.