

Job 33:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.

Analysis

Elihu quotes Job: "I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me." The adjective *zak* (זָק, "clean") means pure or guiltless. The adjective *tom* (טוֹם, "innocent") denotes completeness or integrity. The noun *avon* (אָוֹן, "iniquity") refers to guilt or perversity. Elihu accuses Job of claiming sinlessness. However, this is a misrepresentation—Job claimed integrity in specific matters his friends charged him with, not absolute sinlessness. Job acknowledged human imperfection (9:2-3, 14:4). From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates the danger of caricaturing opponents' positions. Elihu's strawman argument allows him to attack a claim Job didn't make. This warns against misrepresenting others in theological debate. Charitable interpretation requires engaging strongest versions of opponents' arguments, not weakest misrepresentations. Yet Elihu's concern has merit: Job's self-defense sometimes bordered on self-righteousness, needing correction.

Historical Context

Ancient legal and wisdom discourse required accurate representation of opponents' claims. Proverbs 18:17 notes that the first to state a case seems right until cross-examination. Elihu's misrepresentation of Job violated standards of honest discourse. However, his underlying concern—that Job's self-defense needed tempering—contained truth that God will ultimately address.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can we engage in theological debate without misrepresenting opponents' positions?
2. What is the difference between defending one's integrity and claiming sinlessness?
3. How does Job's experience warn us about the fine line between proper self-defense and self-righteousness?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי כָּשֵׁר	אֲנִי	כָּלִי	פָּשַׁע	אֲנִי	אֲנִי	אֲנִי
I am clean	H589	H1097	without transgression	I am innocent	H595	H3808
H2134			H6588	H2643		
וְלֹא	אֲנִי	אֲנִי				
neither is there iniquity						
H5771						

Additional Cross-References

Job 10:7 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.

Job 16:17 (Parallel theme): Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure.

Job 9:21 (Parallel theme): Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

Job 11:4 (Parallel theme): For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.

Job 29:14 (Parallel theme): I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.

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