

Job 34:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.

Analysis

How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands. Elihu escalates his argument: if earthly kings deserve respect (verse 18), God deserves infinitely more because He shows no partiality. The phrase "accepteth not the persons" (lo' nasa pene, לֹא נָשָׂא פָנִים) literally means "does not lift up the face"—a Hebrew idiom for showing favoritism or partiality. God's impartiality appears throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11).

Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor uses nakar (נָכַר, regardeth) meaning to recognize, acknowledge, or show preference. Shoa (שׁוֹעַ, rich) contrasts with dal (דָל, poor), encompassing economic extremes. The reason for divine impartiality follows: **they all are the work of his hands** (ki ma'aseh yadav kullam, קַיְמָעֵשָׂה כָלָם). Every person, regardless of status, is God's handiwork—created, sustained, and valued equally. This doctrine revolutionizes social ethics. Ancient Near Eastern society was rigidly hierarchical; kings and nobles had vastly more worth than peasants. God's impartial creation undermines such hierarchies, establishing equal human dignity before the Creator. The verse anticipates James 2:1-9's prohibition against favoritism in the church. Ironically, while Elihu rightly describes God's impartiality, he wrongly assumes Job's suffering must indicate God's judgment rather than recognizing that God's purposes transcend simple retribution.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern legal systems often favored the wealthy and powerful (Exodus 23:2-3, Leviticus 19:15 command impartiality, showing the problem was pervasive). Israel's covenant law mandated equal justice (Deuteronomy 1:16-17), reflecting God's character. Job himself had administered justice impartially (29:12-17). Elihu's affirmation of divine impartiality is sound theology, though his application to Job's case misses the mark—God's impartial justice doesn't preclude testing the righteous for purposes beyond punishment.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that all people are equally God's handiwork challenge favoritism in your relationships and judgments?
2. What comfort does God's impartiality provide in a world where human justice often favors the powerful?
3. How should the doctrine that God values rich and poor equally shape Christian social ethics and ministry?

Interlinear Text

לֹא אֲשֶׁר רָ
H834 H3808 **How much less to him that accepteth** H5375
בְּשֶׁ אֵלֶּנֶּ
לְפָנֶנֶּי
more than H6440
יְלֹא שָׁרֵם
of princes H3808
לְפָנֶנֶּי
more than H6440
בְּשֶׁ עַמְּ
לְפָנֶנֶּי
the poor H1800
מְעַשֵּׂת הָ
for they all are the work H4639
נְכֹר
nor regardeth H5234
the rich H7771
more than H6440
the poor H1800
מְעַשֵּׂת הָ
for they all are the work H4639
כָּלָם:
of his hands H3605
H3027

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 10:17 (Parallel theme): For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Acts 10:34 (Parallel theme): Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Colossians 3:25 (Parallel theme): But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Romans 2:11 (Parallel theme): For there is no respect of persons with God.

Ephesians 6:9 (Parallel theme): And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

2 Chronicles 19:7 (Parallel theme): Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

1 Peter 1:17 (Parallel theme): And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

Job 31:15 (Parallel theme): Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?

Proverbs 14:31 (Parallel theme): He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

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