

Job 35:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and,
What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?

Analysis

Elihu quotes Job's question: "For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" The noun *sakan* (סָקָן, "advantage") means benefit or profit. The verb *ya'al* (יָאֵל, "profit") asks about usefulness. Elihu accuses Job of asking what good righteousness does. This is another mischaracterization—Job questioned why righteousness didn't protect from suffering, not whether righteousness matters. From a Reformed perspective, Elihu identifies a real danger: justifying righteousness by its earthly benefits rather than God's glory and command. Yet Job's actual question was more subtle: if covenant promises blessing, why does he suffer? This reflects wrestling with providence, not denying righteousness's value. The distinction matters: questioning God's ways isn't the same as rejecting His commands. Lament psalms similarly question God's dealings while maintaining obedience.

Historical Context

Covenant theology taught that righteousness brings blessing (Deuteronomy 28). Job's suffering thus raised legitimate questions about providence. However, later revelation clarifies that righteousness's ultimate value transcends earthly rewards—it's commanded because God is righteous and we're to reflect His image. Elihu's concern that righteousness must be pursued regardless of immediate benefit contains truth, even if his representation of Job's position is flawed.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between questioning God's providence and denying the value of righteousness?
2. How should Christians maintain obedience when earthly rewards don't follow?
3. What does Job's experience teach about the relationship between covenant promises and individual providence?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	תֵּאמַר	מָה	טֶכֶן.	לִי	מָה
H3588	For thou saidst	H4100	What advantage	H0	H4100
	H559		H5532		
אֵלַי			מִחַטָּאתַי:		
will it be unto thee and What profit			shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin		
H3276			H2403		

Additional Cross-References

Job 34:9 (Parallel theme): For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.