

Job 35:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?

Analysis

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? (אִם־צַדִּיקָתָּ מַה־תֵּתֶנְּ לוֹ, im-tsadaqta mah-titten-lo)—The verb tsadaq (צַדִּיק) means 'to be righteous' or 'to be in the right.' Elihu's rhetorical question challenges Job's implicit claim that his righteousness obligates God to respond favorably. **Or what receiveth he of thine hand?** (אוֹ מַה־יִּקַּח מִיַּדְּךָ, o mah-miyadkha yiqqach)—laqach (יִקַּח), 'to receive' or 'take,' emphasizes that God gains nothing from human righteousness.

Elihu articulates divine aseity—God's self-sufficiency and independence from creation. This theological truth appears throughout Scripture: 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof' (Psalm 50:12); 'Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?' (Romans 11:35). Human righteousness doesn't create divine debt or obligate blessing.

Yet this truth requires nuance: while God needs nothing from us, He chooses covenant relationship where obedience pleases Him and sin grieves Him. The incarnation reveals God's voluntary vulnerability to human action—we can wound Christ, serve Him, feed Him (Matthew 25:40). Elihu grasps God's transcendent self-sufficiency but underestimates covenantal mutuality. Job later learns (42:5-6) that seeing God matters infinitely more than receiving answers—relationship transcends transaction.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern polytheism often depicted gods as needing human service—sacrifices fed deities, temples housed them, rituals maintained cosmic order. Biblical monotheism radically rejected this transactional framework, asserting God's absolute self-sufficiency. Elihu's argument defends this distinctive theology against any suggestion that human righteousness creates divine obligation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God needs nothing from you affect your motivation for obedience?
2. In what ways do we subtly treat righteousness as creating divine debt or earning blessing?
3. How can we balance God's transcendent self-sufficiency with the biblical teaching that our actions genuinely please or grieve Him?

Interlinear Text

אָד	אִם תִּצְדֵּק	מֶה	תִּתֵּן	לִי	אִם	מֶה	מִדֶּךָ
H518	If thou be righteous	H4100	what givest	H0	H176	H4100	he of thine hand
	H6663		H5414				H3027
:חָק!							
thou him or what receiveth							
H3947							

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 16:2 (Parallel theme): O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

Proverbs 9:12 (Parallel theme): If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

Romans 11:35 (Parallel theme): Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

Luke 17:10 (Parallel theme): So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

1 Chronicles 29:14 (Parallel theme): But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

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