

Job 35:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.

Analysis

Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art (לְאִישׁ־כְּמוֹךָ רָשָׁעָךְ, le-ish-kamocha rish'ekha)—Rasha (רָשָׁע) denotes 'wickedness' or 'guilt.' Elihu argues that human sin affects fellow humans, not God. **And thy righteousness may profit the son of man** (וְצִדְקָתְךָ יִנְצֵחַ אֶת־בְּנֵי־אָדָם, ul-ven-adam tsidqatekha)—Tsedaqah (צִדְקָה), 'righteousness,' benefits ben-adam (בְּנֵי־אָדָם), 'son of man,' humanity collectively.

This verse complements verse 7's divine transcendence with moral action's horizontal dimension. Sin and righteousness primarily impact the human community, not God's essential being. This contains profound truth: ethical behavior creates societal consequences—injustice harms communities, righteousness builds them (Proverbs 14:34).

Yet Elihu's limitation appears again: while God's being isn't affected by human action, His covenantal heart responds to both wickedness and righteousness. 'The LORD's soul was grieved for the misery of Israel' (Judges 10:16); 'Grieve not the holy Spirit of God' (Ephesians 4:30). God's impassibility (unchanging essence) coexists with His covenant responsiveness. Elihu rightly emphasizes creation-order morality's social impact but underplays covenant relationship's divine-human mutuality. Jesus later demonstrates this balance—suffering evil's effects (horizontal) while bearing sin's divine judgment (vertical, Isaiah 53:10).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature emphasized communal consequences of individual behavior. Hammurabi's Code, Egyptian Ma'at concept, and Mesopotamian wisdom texts all stressed social order requiring ethical behavior. Elihu stands within this tradition while adding theological depth—righteous living serves human community, not divine need.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that your behavior primarily affects fellow humans (not God's essential being) shape your ethical motivations?
2. What is the relationship between horizontal ethics (affecting humans) and vertical covenant relationship (affecting God's response)?
3. How can we avoid both the error of thinking God needs our righteousness and the error of thinking He's indifferent to it?

Interlinear Text

לְאִישׁ	כָּמֹ וְכִי	רָשָׁע בְּ	וְלִבְּנִי	אֶדְ מִן
may hurt a man	H3644	Thy wickedness	may profit the son	of man
H376		H7562	H1121	H120
צִדְקָתְךָ:				
as thou art and thy righteousness				
H6666				

