

Job 36:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.

Analysis

Take heed, regard not iniquity (הִשָּׁמֶר אֶל־תִּפְכוֹן אֶל־אַוֵּן, hishamer al-tefen el-aven)—Elihu issues an urgent warning using shamar (to guard, keep, take heed). The verb panah (to turn, face, regard) with aven (iniquity, wickedness, trouble) warns against turning toward sin as an escape from suffering. This represents the core temptation in trials: when righteous living brings pain while wickedness seems easier, will we compromise?

For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction (כִּי־עַל־זֶה בָּחַרְתָּ מֵעֲוֹן, ki-al-zeh bacharta me'oni)—The verb bachar (to choose, select, prefer) emphasizes deliberate decision. Elihu accuses Job of choosing complaint and questioning God (aven) over patiently enduring oni (affliction, humiliation). While this accusation misreads Job's motives, it contains a crucial principle: suffering tests whether we'll maintain integrity or choose sin as a perceived escape. Moses chose 'to suffer affliction with the people of God' rather than enjoy sin's pleasures (Hebrews 11:25). Peter commands: 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer... but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed' (1 Peter 4:15-16).

Historical Context

In wisdom literature, the choice between righteousness and wickedness is constantly presented as a fork in the road (Psalm 1, Proverbs 4:14-19). Elihu frames Job's situation as this classic choice: will he maintain integrity under

affliction or turn to 'iniquity' (complaining against God) as relief? Though Elihu misapplies this to Job, the principle remains valid.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What shortcuts to relief from suffering tempt you to compromise your integrity?
2. How does patient endurance of unjust suffering honor God more than demanding immediate vindication?
3. In what ways might our complaints against God's justice become the very sin we're falsely accused of?

Interlinear Text

הַ שְׁמַר	אֶל	יְתִיכֹן	אֶל	אֵין	כִּי	עַל	הַ	יְ
Take heed	H408	regard	H413	not iniquity	H3588	H5921	H2088	
H8104		H6437		H205				
בְּחַרְתָּ				מֵעַנִי:				
for this hast thou chosen				rather than affliction				
H977				H6040				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:25 (Sin): Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Psalms 66:18 (Sin): If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

1 Peter 3:17 (Parallel theme): For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Job 35:3 (Sin): For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?

Matthew 16:24 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 13:21 (Parallel theme): Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Ezekiel 14:4 (Sin): Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

Daniel 6:10 (Parallel theme): Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.