

Job 36:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction;

Analysis

And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction—The Hebrew uses two images of captivity: צִקִים (ziqim, "fetters/chains") for physical bondage and חֲבֵלִי-עֲנֵי (chavlei-oni, "cords of affliction") for suffering's constraining power. The verb יָלַקְדוּ (yillakedu, "be holden/caught") suggests entrapment, like prey in a hunter's snare (Psalm 124:7).

Elihu shifts his argument: when the righteous suffer (verse 7 promised their exaltation), it serves pedagogical purposes. Affliction becomes God's classroom where He reveals hidden sin and prevents greater transgression. This parallels Hebrews 12:5-11, which presents divine discipline as proof of sonship, not rejection. The "cords of affliction" aren't punishment for wickedness but correction for the righteous—painful yet purposeful. Job himself is Exhibit A: righteous yet suffering, not because of sin but for spiritual refinement God will eventually explain (42:5-6).

Historical Context

Ancient prisons used literal fetters (metal shackles) and cords (rope bindings) to restrain captives. Elihu employs this imagery metaphorically for any constraining suffering—illness, poverty, social disgrace. Unlike the three friends who insisted suffering proved guilt, Elihu introduces a revolutionary concept: God uses affliction to teach the righteous, not merely punish the wicked. This anticipates

Christian theology of sanctification through trials (Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does viewing your afflictions as 'God's classroom' rather than punishment change your response to suffering?
2. What might God be trying to teach you through current limitations or 'cords of affliction'?
3. How can we distinguish between suffering as divine discipline and suffering as spiritual warfare or natural consequence?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵם	וְאֵם	אָסֹר יְמִינָה	בְּצָבֵלִי	בְּצָבֵלִי	עַתִּים					
H518	And if they be bound	H631	in fetters	H2131	and be holden	H3920	in cords	H2256	of affliction	H6040

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 107:10 (Parallel theme): Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron;

Proverbs 5:22 (Parallel theme): His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.