

Job 37:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.

Analysis

Teach us what we shall say unto him—Elihu acknowledges human inadequacy in addressing God. The phrase **we cannot order our speech** (לֹא-נָאַרְךָ, lo-naarokh) uses עֲרָךְ (arakh), meaning to set in order, arrange, or prepare for battle. We cannot marshal arguments before God as warriors array battle lines. Why? **By reason of darkness** (מִפְנֵי-חֹשֶׁךְ, miphnei-choshekh)—not moral darkness but intellectual darkness, the limitation of human understanding.

This confession anticipates Job's final response: 'I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not' (Job 42:3). Paul similarly writes, 'Now we see through a glass, darkly' (1 Corinthians 13:12). The 'darkness' isn't ignorance due to sin but creaturely limitation. Even regenerate minds cannot fully comprehend God's eternal purposes. Elihu's humility contrasts with Job's earlier demands for explanation (Job 13:22, 23:3-7). True wisdom acknowledges the epistemological gap between Creator and creature.

Historical Context

In ancient legal settings, litigants carefully ordered speeches to present their case. Elihu admits that before God, no human can properly arrange arguments—not due to lack of skill but because divine wisdom infinitely surpasses human comprehension. This contrasts with Greek philosophy's confidence in human reason. Hebraic wisdom began with fearing God (Proverbs 1:7), recognizing human limitation.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When have you experienced the 'darkness' of not being able to understand God's purposes, and how did you respond?
2. How should recognizing our intellectual limitations before God affect how we pray and make requests?
3. Does admitting 'darkness' mean abandoning reason, or recognizing reason's proper limits?

Interlinear Text

בְּעָרְבָּה	לֹא	לֹזֶן	מִה	הַזְדִּיעָנוּ	בְּאָמֵר	נִבְאָרֵב
Teach	H4100	us what we shall say	H0	H3808	unto him for we cannot order	H6186
H3045		H559				

מִפְנִי	חַשְׁבָּה:
our speech by reason	of darkness

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