

Job 5:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

Analysis

Divine Reversal of Human Wisdom: The Hebrew "taketh" (lakad) means "to capture," "ensnare," or "seize," suggesting God uses the wise person's own schemes as a trap that springs shut on them. "Craftiness" (ormah) refers to shrewd cunning, cleverness, or subtlety, often with negative connotations of manipulation and deceptive scheming. This is the same word used of the serpent in Genesis 3:1, indicating cunning employed for evil purposes rather than godly wisdom.

Speed of Divine Justice: The phrase "carried headlong" (nimhar) means "hastened," "brought to a swift end," or "rushed forward," emphasizing how quickly God can dismantle even the most elaborate, carefully constructed schemes. The "froward" (nipthalim) refers to those who are twisted, perverted, or crooked in their dealings and counsel. Eliphaz quotes this principle to argue that the wicked receive swift justice, though Job's case demonstrates that suffering isn't always direct punishment for personal sin. Notably, Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 3:19, applying it to worldly wisdom versus God's wisdom, showing its enduring theological significance across both testaments and demonstrating how God regularly frustrates human schemes that oppose His purposes.

Historical Context

This verse comes from Eliphaz's first speech to Job (Job 4-5), delivered circa 2000-1800 BC during the patriarchal period. Eliphaz, one of Job's three friends, begins sympathetically but soon argues that suffering always results from sin—a

theology of strict retribution. While his principle about God overthrowing the schemes of the crafty is biblically sound (supported elsewhere in Scripture), his application to Job's situation is incorrect. The book challenges simplistic cause-and-effect theology while affirming God's ultimate justice. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature similarly discussed the fate of the wicked, but Job uniquely addresses the problem of righteous suffering. This verse's quotation by Paul demonstrates its continuing relevance: God regularly frustrates human wisdom that opposes His purposes, from Babel to the Cross.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's ability to catch the wise in their own craftiness demonstrate His superior wisdom and sovereignty?
2. What is the difference between godly wisdom and the cunning craftiness condemned in this verse?
3. Why does Paul quote this verse in 1 Corinthians 3:19, and how does he apply it?
4. Though this principle is true, why was Eliphaz wrong to apply it directly to Job's suffering?
5. What historical or biblical examples illustrate God catching the crafty in their own schemes?

Interlinear Text

לִּי ד	חֲכָמִי יִם	בְּעִרְמָם ם	וְעֵצַ ת	נִפְתָּלִי יִם
He taketh	the wise	in their own craftiness	and the counsel	of the froward
H3920	H2450	H6193	H6098	H6617
נִמְהָרָה:				
is carried headlong				
H4116				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:19 (Parallel theme): For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Psalms 18:26 (Parallel theme): With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

Luke 1:51 (Parallel theme): He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

2 Samuel 15:31 (Parallel theme): And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

Esther 9:25 (Parallel theme): But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Esther 7:10 (Parallel theme): So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Proverbs 3:32 (Parallel theme): For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

2 Samuel 15:34 (Parallel theme): But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

2 Samuel 17:23 (Parallel theme): And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

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