

Job 6:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.

Analysis

Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. Job responds to his friends' accusations with remarkable openness to correction if they can demonstrate genuine fault. The Hebrew verb *yarah* (יָרָה, "teach me") means to instruct, direct, or point out—the same root used for Torah (teaching/law). Job requests genuine instruction, not accusation. "I will hold my tongue" (*acharish*, אָחַרֵּשׁ) means to be silent, cease speaking—Job promises to accept correction if shown legitimate error.

"Cause me to understand" (*havinu*, הָבִינוּ) uses a verb meaning to perceive, discern, or comprehend with insight. Job doesn't reject rebuke categorically but demands specificity: "wherein I have erred" (*ma shagiti*, מַה־שָּׁגִיתִי) asks what specific sin he has committed. The verb *shagah* (שָׁגָה) means to go astray, err unintentionally, or make a mistake—suggesting inadvertent sin rather than willful rebellion.

This verse models humble wisdom combined with integrity. Job remains open to instruction while refusing to confess non-existent sins. His friends have offered general accusations—that suffering proves sin—without identifying actual transgressions. Job's response teaches that genuine repentance requires conviction of specific sin, not vague guilt manufactured to explain suffering. The passage demonstrates that maintaining innocence when falsely accused is not pride but truth-telling, a principle vindicated when God declares Job spoke rightly (42:7).

Historical Context

Job 6 comes early in the dialogues between Job and his friends. Eliphaz has just delivered his first speech (chapters 4-5), implying Job's suffering results from sin and urging repentance. Job responds with anguish (6:1-13), defends his right to complain (6:14-23), and then makes this appeal (6:24-30) for his friends to prove their accusations rather than merely asserting them.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions valued teachability and correction (Proverbs emphasizes receiving instruction). Job's willingness to be taught demonstrates he holds wisdom's values—but he demands evidence, not empty rhetoric. The cultural context of honor-shame societies made false accusations devastating; Job's request for specifics protects both truth and reputation.

This passage addresses a perennial pastoral problem: how to minister to the suffering. Job's friends assumed suffering always indicates personal sin, a simplistic theology that damaged rather than healed. Job's appeal—show me my error or cease accusing—models healthy boundaries in spiritual counsel. The book ultimately teaches that pastoral wisdom requires humility about what we don't know, specificity in addressing sin, and willingness to sit with mystery when God's purposes aren't clear.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Job's openness to correction combined with his refusal to confess non-existent sins model healthy spiritual integrity?
2. What is the difference between genuine conviction of specific sin and manufactured guilt to explain suffering?

3. How can we balance teachability with resistance to false accusations in our own lives?
4. What does this passage teach about the importance of specificity when offering spiritual counsel or correction?
5. In what ways do Job's friends fail to meet his reasonable request for evidence of his supposed sins?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּי הָ וְרוּנִי

Teach
H3384

H589

אָחַר יֵשׁ
me and I will hold my tongue

וַיִּמָּה

H4100

שֶׁגַּי יִתִּי

wherein I have erred

הַבּ יְנוּ

and cause me to understand

: 7

H0

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 9:9 (Parallel theme): Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

James 3:2 (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Job 10:2 (Parallel theme): I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.

Psalms 32:8 (Parallel theme): I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalms 19:12 (Parallel theme): Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

Job 33:1 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.

Job 5:27 (Parallel theme): Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

Job 34:32 (Parallel theme): That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org