

Job 7:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.

Analysis

Job reaches the depths of despair: 'My soul chooseth strangling' (cheneq, חֲנֹק) 'and death rather than my life' (atsamot, אֶצְמוֹת, literally 'my bones' or 'my frame'). The verb 'chooseth' (bachar, בָּחַר) is the same used for God's election—Job 'elects' death over continued existence. This isn't mere death wish but considered preference for non-existence over unbearable suffering.

The honesty is shocking yet biblical. Scripture doesn't sanitize the depths of righteous suffering. Job joins other saints who wished for death: Moses (Numbers 11:15), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:14-18), Jonah (Jonah 4:3). God doesn't condemn their honesty but meets them in their despair. The Reformed tradition distinguishes between expressing death wishes in prayer versus pursuing suicide—one is honest lament, the other is sinful presumption.

Job's death wish anticipates the gospel paradox: we must die to self to truly live (Galatians 2:20). Job wants literal death; Christ calls us to death of the old man and resurrection of the new. Job's words, though spoken in ignorance of resurrection hope, point toward Christian mortification—choosing death to sin rather than continuation in it.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature occasionally expressed despair over life's burdens (Egyptian 'Dispute Between a Man and His Ba'), but Job's expression is

notable for its directness and theological context. He maintains integrity while questioning whether existence itself is worthwhile—a profound philosophical and existential crisis.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do we pastor those who honestly wish for death while preventing them from acting on those wishes?
2. What does Job's death wish teach about the legitimacy of expressing our darkest thoughts to God in prayer?
3. In what ways does the gospel's call to 'die to self' transform and fulfill Job's longing for death?

Interlinear Text

וּתְבַחֵר	מִחַנֵּךְ קַ	נַפְשִׁי י	וְ מוֹת	מֵעַצְמוֹתַי:
chooseth	strangling	So that my soul	and death	rather than my life
H977	H4267	H5315	H4194	H6106

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