

Job 7:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity.

Analysis

Job rejects continued existence: 'I loathe it' (ma'as, מָאָס, to reject, despise, refuse). The same verb described his loathsome skin (verse 5); now he applies it to life itself. 'I would not live alway' (olam, עֹלָם) uses the Hebrew word typically translated 'forever' or 'eternal'—Job refuses immortality in his current state. He pleads 'let me alone' (chadal, 'חָדָל, cease, desist) because his 'days are vanity' (hebel, הָבֵל), the same word used repeatedly in Ecclesiastes for meaninglessness and futility.

Job's rejection of eternal life under current conditions illuminates a profound truth: mere existence isn't inherently valuable—quality of existence matters. Eternal life in suffering would be hell, not heaven. This anticipates the biblical distinction between mere immortality and resurrected life in God's presence. Hell is eternal existence without God; heaven is eternal life in joyful communion with Him.

The plea 'let me alone' echoes throughout Scripture from sufferers who want divine attention withdrawn (Psalm 39:13). But the gospel reveals that God's refusal to leave us alone constitutes grace—He pursues us even in our desire to be left to die (Psalm 139:7-12). Job will learn that God's attention, though presently painful, serves redemptive purposes.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern perspectives on eternal life varied. Some cultures sought immortality through legacy and offspring; others envisioned shadowy afterlife in Sheol. Job's rejection of 'living always' in his current state highlights that without hope of transformation, immortality becomes curse rather than blessing.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Job's refusal of 'eternal life' in suffering inform our understanding of heaven as qualitatively different existence?
2. What does God's refusal to 'let us alone' reveal about divine love even when we desperately want to be left in peace?
3. In what ways does the gospel transform our understanding of life's value and meaning?

Interlinear Text

גַּם	מֵתִים	בָּל	לֹא	מֵאָסוֹתִי
I loathe	alway	it I would not live	let me alone	
H3988	H3808	H5769	H2421	H4480
				H3588
בָּלְנִים				
are vanity	for my days			
H1892	H3117			

Additional Cross-References

Job 10:1 (Parallel theme): My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

1 Kings 19:4 (Parallel theme): But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

Psalms 39:13 (Parallel theme): O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

Job 6:9 (Parallel theme): Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!

Job 9:21 (Parallel theme): Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

Job 10:20 (Parallel theme): Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,

Job 14:6 (Parallel theme): Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

Jonah 4:8 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.