

Job 7:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

Analysis

Job concludes his lament questioning why God doesn't forgive: 'Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?' The verbs 'pardon' (nasa, נָשָׂא) and 'take away' (avar, אָבַר) both involve removal or carrying away. Job acknowledges the possibility of sin ('my transgression,' pesha, פֶּשַׁע, rebellion; 'mine iniquity,' avon, אָוֹן, perversity) but questions why God doesn't simply forgive rather than inflict such suffering.

The final line is haunting: 'for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.' Job anticipates imminent death—soon he'll sleep permanently in the grave, and when God finally seeks him, it will be too late. This creates urgency: if God's purpose is reconciliation, why delay? The irony is profound—Job will indeed 'sleep in the dust' (chapter 42), but will awaken to restoration.

Job's question finds its answer in the gospel: God doesn't merely pardon—He sends His Son to bear our iniquity (Isaiah 53:6). The delay Job protests serves redemptive purposes he cannot yet fathom. When God finally 'seeks him in the morning,' it won't be too late but perfectly timed for vindication and blessing.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern religion understood divine forgiveness as capricious—gods might or might not relent from punishment. Job's question assumes God should forgive, revealing his understanding of divine character as essentially merciful. This theological conviction sustains him even when experience suggests otherwise.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Job's question about delayed forgiveness illuminate God's timing in our sanctification?
2. What does this verse teach about maintaining faith in God's mercy when experiencing His discipline?
3. In what ways does Christ's bearing our iniquity provide the answer Job seeks?

Interlinear Text

אֶת	וְתָעַב יְיָ	פְּשָׁעִי	תִּשָּׁח אֶל	לֹא	וְיָהּ הֵן
H853	H5674	H6588	H5375	H3808	H4100
	and take away	my transgression	And why dost thou not pardon		
אֲשָׁכַב	לְעָפָר רַעְתָּה כִּי	עוֹנֵי נִי			
H7901	H6083	H3588	H6258		
for now shall I sleep	in the dust	mine iniquity			
וְאִינָנִי	וְשָׁחַרְתָּ נִי				
H369	H7836				
	and thou shalt seek me in the morning				

Additional Cross-References

Job 10:14 (Sin): If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.

Daniel 12:2 (Parallel theme): And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Isaiah 64:9 (Sin): Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

1 John 1:9 (Sin): If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (Parallel theme): Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.