

Job 9:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?

Analysis

Job acknowledges divine sovereignty: 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?' The verb 'taketh away' (chathaph, חָתַף) means to seize or snatch away violently. 'Hinder' (shub, שׁוּב) means to turn back or restrain. Job declares God's absolute sovereignty—none can resist His will or demand accountability. The rhetorical questions expect negative answers: no one can hinder God or question His actions.

Job's confession mirrors Romans 9:20: 'who art thou that repliest against God?' Yet the contexts differ: Paul celebrates sovereign grace in salvation, while Job wrestles with sovereign power in affliction. Same doctrine, different pastoral application. Job correctly identifies divine sovereignty but lacks the fuller revelation of how God exercises it redemptively. He sees God's power to take away but not yet the full picture of God's purpose in doing so.

The Reformed tradition highly values divine sovereignty—God's absolute control over all things. But this doctrine must be held alongside divine goodness and wisdom. God's right to act without human approval doesn't mean He acts arbitrarily. His purposes, though inscrutable to Job, are redemptive and wise. Job will learn that 'What doest thou?' isn't rebellion when asked in faith, but presumption when demanded in unbelief.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings exercised absolute power within their domains—'Who can say to the king, What doest thou?' was rhetorical question asserting royal sovereignty. Job applies this to God's cosmic sovereignty, recognizing divine kingship that far exceeds human monarchs' limited power.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do we reconcile God's sovereign right to act without our approval with our legitimate questions about His purposes?
2. What does Job's acknowledgment of divine sovereignty teach about the proper bounds of questioning God?
3. In what ways does the gospel reveal that God's sovereign 'taking away' ultimately serves redemptive purposes?

Interlinear Text

הָ	יֵּ	חֹתֵרֶף	מִי	יִשְׁכֹּחַ נֹוֹ	מִי	יֹאמַר
H2005		Behold he taketh away	H4310	who can hinder	H4310	him who will say
		H2862		H7725		H559
יִי	מָה	אֵל לִי	תַעֲשֶׂה:			
H413	H4100	unto him	What doest			
			H6213			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 45:9 (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Job 11:10 (Parallel theme): If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?

Job 23:13 (Parallel theme): But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

Job 34:29 (Parallel theme): When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:

Romans 11:34 (Parallel theme): For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Job 33:13 (Parallel theme): Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

Jeremiah 18:6 (Parallel theme): O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

Matthew 20:15 (Parallel theme): Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

Daniel 4:35 (Parallel theme): And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?