

Job 9:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

Analysis

Job acknowledges God's wisdom and power: 'He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?' The phrase 'wise in heart' (chakam lebab, חָכָם לִבָּב) attributes comprehensive understanding to God. 'Mighty in strength' (ammis koach, אֲמִיס כֹּחַ) denotes irresistible power. The rhetorical question expects negative answer—none who hardens himself (qashah, קָשָׁה) against God prospers (shalom, שָׁלוֹם, finds peace or success).

Job's affirmation of divine attributes doesn't comfort but terrifies—if God is all-wise and all-powerful, how can Job vindicate himself? The same attributes that should reassure instead threaten. This illustrates how suffering can invert our theological perception: God's sovereignty becomes frightening rather than comforting when we experience Him as adversary rather than ally. Job's friends assume God's power ensures justice; Job questions whether justice is possible when power is so asymmetrical.

The Reformed emphasis on God's sovereignty faces this same tension: if God ordains all things, how can we be confident He ordains them justly? The answer comes through Christ—God's power and wisdom ultimately manifest in the cross (1 Corinthians 1:23-24), where divine justice and mercy meet. Job lacks this revelation, making his faith all the more remarkable.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern religions often portrayed divine power as capricious. Job's monotheism insists God's power is matched by wisdom—He doesn't act arbitrarily. However, this compounds Job's problem: if God is wise, why does He treat the righteous like the wicked? The book wrestles with theodicy within monotheistic framework.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do we maintain confidence in God's goodness when His power seems directed against us?
2. What does Job's question teach about the relationship between divine sovereignty and justice?
3. In what ways does the cross demonstrate that God's power and wisdom serve redemptive rather than arbitrary purposes?

Interlinear Text

חָכֵם	לֵב	וְעֹז	כֹּחַ	וְ	הַקָּשָׁה	אֵלַי
He is wise	in heart	and mighty	in strength	H4310	who hath hardened	H413
H2450	H3824	H533	H3581		H7185	
וְשָׁלַח						
himself against him and hath prospered						
H7999						

Additional Cross-References

Job 36:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom.

Ephesians 3:20 (Parallel theme): Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Job 9:19 (Parallel theme): If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?

Proverbs 29:1 (Parallel theme): He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Ephesians 3:10 (Parallel theme): To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,