

Psalms 119:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Analysis

Turn away my reproach which I fear (הַעֲבֵר חֲרָפְתִּי אֲשֶׁר יִגְדָּתִי)—Avar (to pass over, remove) asks God to cause cherpah (reproach, disgrace, scorn) to pass away. Yagor (to fear, dread) reveals anxiety about mockery from enemies who scorn covenant faithfulness. The psalmist fears not the reproach itself but its implications: does God defend those who follow His judgments? **For thy judgments are good** (כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים)—Mishpatim (judgments, ordinances) are declared tovim (good) despite appearances. This is faith's confession when circumstances suggest otherwise.

This verse captures the believer's tension: following God's good judgments in a fallen world invites reproach. Will God vindicate His servants or allow them to be shamed? The psalmist's confidence rests not on personal merit but on God's character—His judgments are good, therefore He must eventually vindicate those who follow them. This finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who endured history's greatest reproach (the cross) trusting the Father's vindication (resurrection). All who unite to Christ share both His reproach and His vindication.

Historical Context

Honor-shame cultures made reproach devastating—mockery could destroy social standing and economic prospects. The psalmist likely faced scorn from wicked Israelites or pagan nations who viewed Torah-obedience as foolishness. The cry for

God to 'turn away' reproach appears throughout psalms of lament, anticipating the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who bore our reproach.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What reproach (mockery, scorn, marginalization) do you face for following God's judgments in your cultural context?
2. How does confessing 'thy judgments are good' help you endure reproach when circumstances suggest God's ways lead to shame?
3. How does Christ's willingness to bear ultimate reproach on the cross free you to endure lesser reproach for righteousness?

Interlinear Text

הָעֵבָר	חַ רְפָתִי	אֲשֶׁר	יִגְדִּי	כִּי	מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ	טוֹבִים:
Turn away	my reproach	H834	which I fear	H3588	for thy judgments	are good
H5674	H2781		H3025		H4941	H2896

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 3:7 (Good): Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 2:8 (Parallel theme): Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Psalms 119:22 (Parallel theme): Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

Revelation 19:2 (Judgment): For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

Romans 2:2 (Judgment): But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

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