

Psalm 119:53

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Analysis

Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. The word **horror** (זָלַעַתָּה, zal'afah) conveys burning indignation mixed with dread—not casual disapproval but visceral grief. This isn't self-righteous anger but holy sorrow, echoing Jeremiah weeping over Jerusalem (Jeremiah 9:1) and Jesus weeping over the city (Luke 19:41).

That forsake thy law (עָזְבִי תָּרַתְּךָ, ozevei toratekha)—the participle emphasizes ongoing, willful abandonment of God's instruction. The psalmist's horror reflects God's own grief over covenant betrayal (Ezekiel 6:9). Paul expresses similar anguish over Israel's unbelief (Romans 9:2-3). True love for God produces proportionate grief over sin's destruction.

Historical Context

The prophets consistently expressed deep emotional distress over Israel's apostasy. This wasn't detached judgment but heartbroken love, reflecting God's own pathos. The exile demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of forsaking Torah, validating the psalmist's horror. Jesus's cleansing of the temple showed similar righteous indignation at religious corruption.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Does the prevalent rejection of God's Word in culture produce 'horror' in your heart, or have you grown numb to it?
2. How can believers cultivate holy grief over sin without falling into self-righteousness or despair?
3. What is the relationship between genuine love for God and proportionate sorrow over sin's destruction?

Interlinear Text

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| תֹּרְמָה: | עַזְבֵּה | מְרַשֵּׁעַ יְמִינֵי | אֲפִילָּעַ הַ | תֹּרְמָה: |
| thy law | H8451 | H7563 | H270 | H2152 |

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 9:3 (Parallel theme): And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

Psalms 119:158 (Word): I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

Jeremiah 13:17 (Parallel theme): But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive.

Philippians 3:18 (Parallel theme): (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Psalms 119:136 (Word): Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Nehemiah 13:25 (Parallel theme): And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

2 Corinthians 12:21 (Parallel theme): And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Habakkuk 3:16 (Parallel theme): When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Daniel 4:19 (Parallel theme): Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

Ezra 10:6 (Parallel theme): Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.