

Psalms 34:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

Analysis

The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. After promising blessing for righteous (vv. 12-15), David declares judgment on wicked. God's face is against evildoers, promising their removal from earth. This balances grace with justice, mercy with judgment.

The face of the LORD is against introduces divine opposition. Face (panim) represents presence, attention, personal engagement. Where God's face toward righteous brings favor (Numbers 6:25-26), His face against wicked brings judgment. Against (be) indicates opposition, hostility. God actively opposes those doing evil—not neutrally tolerating but personally resisting. James 4:6 declares: God resists proud but gives grace to humble. This is holy opposition to sin and sinners.

Them that do evil identifies objects of divine wrath. Do evil ('asah ra') means practice wickedness, commit harmful acts. Not merely those tempted by evil but those doing it—choosing, practicing, persisting in wickedness. These aren't struggling believers but committed evildoers. Their character is defined by practicing evil, not occasional failing but lifestyle of wickedness.

To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth states judgment's severity. Cut off (karat) means eliminate, destroy, remove completely. This is judicial execution, covenantal excommunication. Remembrance (zeker) means memorial, name,

legacy. From the earth (erets) means from land, world, humanity. Combined, these mean total obliteration—not just death but erasure. No memory remains, no legacy endures, no descendants continue their name. Proverbs 10:7: Name of wicked shall rot. This is covenant curse—evildoers are blotted out completely.

This verse addresses theodicy. Why do wicked prosper? Because God's judgment isn't immediate but certain. Psalm 37:1-2,9-10 promises: Fret not because of evildoers...They shall soon be cut down...those waiting on LORD shall inherit earth, but wicked shall be cut off. Delayed judgment isn't absent judgment. God's face is against them; their end is sure.

Historical Context

Cutting off remembrance was ultimate curse in ancient Near East. Israelites valued legacy, descendants, remembered name. To be cut off meant familial and covenantal death—no offspring, no memory, no future. Wicked Haman's name is cursed even today. Righteous Abel's testimony still speaks though dead (Hebrews 11:4). Contrast illustrates remembrance's significance.

God's face being against evildoers appears throughout Scripture. Psalm 21:9: LORD's hand will find out all His enemies; His right hand will find out those hating Him. Proverbs 2:22: Wicked shall be cut off from earth, transgressors rooted out. Isaiah 13:9: Behold, day of LORD comes, cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to lay land desolate, destroy its sinners. Final judgment accomplishes complete removal of wicked (Matthew 13:41-43, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Revelation 20:11-15).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's face being against evildoers complement His face being toward righteous?
2. What is difference between struggling with sin and doing evil as lifestyle—why does this distinction matter?
3. Why is having remembrance cut off considered severe judgment, and what does this reveal about human longings?
4. How does delayed judgment (wicked temporarily prospering) test and refine faith?
5. In what ways does this verse's warning function as both deterrent and comfort—warning wicked, assuring righteous?

Interlinear Text

לִפְנֵי יְהָוָה שְׁנָא בְּעֵשָׂו יְהִי גָּזָב				
The face of the LORD is against them that do evil	to cut off			
H6440	H3068	H6213	H7451	H3772
מִן־אָדָם זְכָרָי				
of them from the earth the remembrance				
H776	H2143			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:7 (Evil): The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Jeremiah 17:13 (References Lord): O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

Jeremiah 44:11 (Evil): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

Job 18:17 (Parallel theme): His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.

Leviticus 17:10 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

Amos 9:4 (Evil): And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

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