

Psalms 38:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

Analysis

But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. David's response to slander (v.12): strategic silence. As a deaf man (כֶּחֱרֵשׁ, kecheresh) he refuses to hear accusations; as a dumb man (כֵּאִלֵּם, ke'illem) he withholds self-defense. The double simile emphasizes deliberate restraint.

This silence fulfills wisdom literature's counsel (Proverbs 26:4) and prefigures Christ's response before accusers: 'He opened not his mouth' (Isaiah 53:7). David doesn't argue, retaliate, or defend—not from weakness but from trust in God's vindication (v.15). Silence before human courts while appealing to the Divine Court demonstrates profound faith.

Historical Context

In ancient honor-shame cultures, public accusations demanded public response or one's reputation was ruined. David's refusal to defend himself would appear as admission of guilt or stunning weakness. Yet he chooses the way of faith over the way of self-justification—a radical trust that God will speak on his behalf.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When falsely accused or slandered, how difficult is it for you to remain 'deaf and dumb' rather than defending yourself?
2. What does strategic silence before human accusers while crying out to God (v.9) teach about proper priorities?
3. How does Jesus's silence before His accusers reshape your understanding of strength versus weakness?

Interlinear Text

וְאֲנִי י	כִּי חֵרֵשׁ	לֹא	אָשָׁמָּה ע	וְכִאֲלִי ׀	לֹא
H589	But I as a deaf	H3808	man heard	not and I was as a dumb man	H3808
	H2795		H8085	H483	
יִפְתָּח	פִּיו:				
that openeth	not his mouth				
H6605	H6310				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 53:7 (Parallel theme): He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Psalms 39:9 (Parallel theme): I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

Psalms 39:2 (Parallel theme): I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

1 Peter 2:23 (Parallel theme): Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

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