

Psalm 38:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

Analysis

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. David depicts sin as floodwaters rising over his head (עַבְרָה, avar, to pass over, overwhelm) and as crushing burden (אֲשָׁפֵן, massa, load). The progression: arrows lodged (v.2) → no soundness (v.3) → drowning/crushed (v.4).

The phrase 'gone over mine head' echoes Psalm 69:2,15 and anticipates Christ's cry from the cross, bearing humanity's sin-flood. The dual metaphor—drowning and crushing—captures sin's suffocating, immobilizing weight. Only confession brings relief (Psalm 32:3-5); attempting to carry guilt leads to spiritual death.

Historical Context

Floodwaters 'going over the head' would resonate with David's audience familiar with sudden flash floods in Judean wadis. The burden imagery recalls the heavy loads carried by beasts or slaves. Both metaphors communicate utter helplessness—one cannot swim when already underwater or walk when already crushed.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. When sin feels like drowning or being crushed, what is God's invitation through that unbearable weight?
2. How does David's honest description of sin's burden contrast with modern tendencies to minimize or rationalize wrongdoing?
3. What 'iniquities' might be accumulating 'over your head' that need urgent confession?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| כִּי | עָוֹנָתִי | עָבֹר וְ | רָאשִׁי | כַּמְשָׁא | כִּי דְ |
| H3588 | For mine iniquities | are gone over | mine head | burden | as an heavy |
| | H5771 | H5674 | H7218 | H4853 | H3515 |
| | | | | | |
| מְקֻפִּין | !כַּבֵּד וְ | | | | |
| they are too heavy | H4480 | | | | |
| | H3513 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 40:12 (Parallel theme): For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

Ezra 9:6 (Parallel theme): And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Matthew 11:28 (Parallel theme): Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Lamentations 1:14 (Parallel theme): The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.

1 Peter 2:24 (Parallel theme): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

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