

Deuteronomy 29:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

Analysis

When he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart (וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבּוֹ)—The reflexive verb hitbarekh ("bless himself") describes self-deception, pronouncing personal absolution despite covenant violation. The presumptuous apostate hears the 'alah ("curse," oath-stipulations) yet claims shalom ("peace," well-being) while walking in sherirut lev ("imagination/stubbornness of heart").

This phrase sherirut lev appears frequently in Jeremiah (3:17, 7:24, 9:14, 11:8, 13:10, 16:12, 18:12, 23:17) to characterize rebellious self-will—following one's own counsel rather than God's word. It denotes hardened autonomy, the opposite of circumcised heart obedience (Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6).

To add drunkenness to thirst (לְמַעַן סְפוֹת הִכּוּהָ אֶת־הַצְמָאָה)—This cryptic idiom likely means "to sweep away the watered with the dry" or "to add the drunk to the thirsty," suggesting total destruction without distinction. Some interpret it as the apostate's insatiable pursuit of sin (drinking excessively when already drunk), others as corporate judgment where the guilty destroy the innocent. Either way, presumption brings comprehensive ruin.

Historical Context

This warning targets covenant presumption—assuming Yahweh's protection while violating covenant terms. Ancient Israel could fall into ethnic presumption ("We're Abraham's descendants") or cultic presumption ("We offer sacrifices"). John the Baptist and Jesus confronted this mentality (Matthew 3:9, John 8:39). The phenomenon appears throughout redemptive history: Eli's sons presumed on priesthood (1 Samuel 2-4), Judah trusted the temple's presence (Jeremiah 7:4), false teachers presumed on grace (Jude 4).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. In what ways might Christians today presume on grace while walking in deliberate sin (Romans 6:1-2)?
2. How does self-blessing (self-justification) differ from genuine assurance grounded in Christ's righteousness?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה	בְּשִׁמְעוֹ	אֶת	דְּבַר י	הָאֵל הַ		
H1961	And it come to pass when he heareth	H853	the words	of this curse		
	H8085		H1697	H423		
אֵת	וְהִתְבָּרַךְ הַ	בְּלִבּוֹ ו	לֵאמֹר	שָׁל וּם	יְהִיָּה	
H2063	that he bless	himself in his heart	saying	I shall have peace	H1961	
	H1288	H3824	H559	H7965		
י	כִּי	בְּשֶׁר וְ	לִבִּי	אֵל הַ	לִמְ עַן	סָפ וְ
H0	though	in the imagination	of mine heart	H1980	H4616	to add
	H3588	H8307	H3820			H5595
הַכֹּהֵן הַ	אֶת	הַצִּמְאָה:				
drunkenness	H853	to thirst				
H7302		H6771				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 7:24 (Parallel theme): But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Numbers 15:39 (Word): And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

Numbers 15:30 (Parallel theme): But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Ephesians 4:17 (Parallel theme): This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Deuteronomy 17:2 (Parallel theme): If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

Psalms 49:18 (Blessing): Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

Psalms 10:11 (Parallel theme): He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

Proverbs 29:1 (Parallel theme): He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Jeremiah 44:27 (Word): Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

Jeremiah 3:17 (Parallel theme): At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.