

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Analysis

This verse balances youthful joy with eschatological accountability. The opening command—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth"—uses the imperative 'simach' (שִׁמְחָה, rejoice), giving divine permission to enjoy youth's energy and opportunities. The parallel 'let thy heart cheer thee' (vitevakha libekha, וַיַּתֵּבְךָ לִבְךָ) literally means 'let your heart make you good/glad.' The phrase 'walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes' initially sounds like license for unbridled indulgence. However, the crucial conjunction 'but' (Hebrew 'ki,' קִי, often 'but' or 'for') introduces the sobering reality: 'know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment' (mishpat, מִשְׁפָט). This isn't contradicting the call to joy but framing it within moral accountability. Legitimate pleasure differs from sinful indulgence because it occurs under divine scrutiny. The young can enjoy life's gifts while maintaining awareness that their choices carry eternal weight. This verse anticipates the book's conclusion (12:13-14): fear God, keep His commandments, for God judges all things.

Historical Context

Youth in ancient Israel faced pressures similar to modern adolescents: emerging independence, sexual awakening, vocational decisions, and peer influence. Solomon, writing from the perspective of old age (12:1-7), addresses young

readers with realism—acknowledge their desires while warning of judgment. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom typically instructed youth to pursue discipline and obedience, suppressing youthful passions. Ecclesiastes takes a more nuanced approach: legitimate joy within divine boundaries. The verse counters both licentious hedonism (doing whatever feels good) and joyless legalism (condemning all pleasure). New Testament parallels include Paul's instruction to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12) and John's letters to young men (1 John 2:13-14). Jesus's first miracle—providing wine at a wedding (John 2:1-11)—demonstrates God's approval of wholesome celebration. Yet the warning about judgment echoes throughout Scripture: 'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10). Youth is a gift to be enjoyed responsibly, not squandered foolishly or suppressed fearfully.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can young people cultivate joy in legitimate pleasures while maintaining awareness of moral accountability before God?
2. What is the difference between enjoying youth as God's gift and indulging in sinful pleasures that will face divine judgment?

Interlinear Text

בִּים	לְבָב	וַיַּעֲבֹר	בְּיַלְדוֹת	בְּחָ וּר	שָׁמַח
Rejoice	O young man	in thy youth	H3190	and let thy heart	thee in the days
H8055	H970	H3208		H3820	H3117

בְּמִרְאָה וְלֹבֶן לְבָבֶךָ יְמִלָּא יְמִלָּא בְּחֹרֶת יְמִלָּא בְּדָרֶךָ וְיְמִלָּא יְמִלָּא וְיְמִלָּא יְמִלָּא
and in the sight and let thy heart and in the ways and walk of thy youth

יְבָאֵב	אֵלֶּה	כָּל	עַל	כִּי	אֵד	עִנְיָן	יְבָאֵב
of thine eyes	but know	H3588	H5921	H3605	H428	will bring	H935

בְּמִשְׁפָט: יְהִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהִי
thee into judgment thou that for all these things God

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 12:14 (Judgment): For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 (Parallel theme): Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Ecclesiastes 3:17 (Judgment): I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Lamentations 3:27 (Parallel theme): It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (Judgment): For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Hebrews 9:27 (Judgment): And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Job 31:7 (Parallel theme): If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands;

Romans 14:10 (Judgment): But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Matthew 5:28 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.