

Ecclesiastes 12:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

Analysis

The preacher sought to find out acceptable words (דְּבַר־חֶפֶץ, divrei-chefets)—literally 'words of delight' or 'pleasing words.' The Hebrew chefets conveys both pleasure and purpose, indicating Solomon sought words that were both aesthetically satisfying and functionally effective. **That which was written was upright, even words of truth** (דְּבַר־אֱמֶת, divrei-emet)—the Preacher balanced form with content, rhetoric with reality.

This verse forms part of the book's epilogue (12:9-14), where a narrator steps back to evaluate Qoheleth's work. The triple emphasis—'acceptable,' 'upright,' 'truth'—establishes the book's credibility. Unlike false teachers who prioritize eloquence over accuracy or tickle ears with pleasant falsehoods (2 Timothy 4:3), Solomon pursued words that were simultaneously beautiful, morally straight, and factually true. His literary craftsmanship served truth-telling, not manipulation.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature highly valued eloquent expression—Egyptian instruction texts, Mesopotamian proverb collections, and Israelite wisdom writings all demonstrated literary artistry. However, Ecclesiastes uniquely emphasizes the ethical dimension of wise speech: words must be not only beautiful but upright and true. This anticipates the New Testament teaching that sound doctrine must be adorned with godly living (Titus 2:10). The epilogue's narrator validates Qoheleth's work for subsequent generations, functioning like canonical

certification. Post-exilic Judaism included Ecclesiastes in Scripture despite its challenging content precisely because it met these criteria: acceptable style, upright character, truthful content.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you balance making your words attractive and persuasive while ensuring they remain truthful and upright?
2. What danger exists when Christian communication prioritizes eloquence or entertainment over accuracy and moral integrity?

Interlinear Text

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|----------|-------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| בִּקֵּשׁ | קוֹה לֵת | לִמְצֹא | דְּבַר י | חֵפֶץ |
| sought | The preacher | to find out | even words | acceptable |
| H1245 | H6953 | H4672 | H1697 | H2656 |
| וְכֵן | וְכֵן | וְכֵן | וְכֵן | וְכֵן |
| and that | which was written | was upright | even words | of truth |
| H3789 | H3476 | H1697 | H571 | |

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 1:5 (Word): For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

1 Timothy 1:15 (Parallel theme): This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

