

Ecclesiastes 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Analysis

Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely (הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיתִי אֲנִי טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶה, hinneh asher-ra'iti ani tov asher-yafeh)—'Behold what I have seen: it is good, it is beautiful.' The doubled affirmation (tov and yafeh) emphasizes positive discovery after the gloom of verses 13-17. **For one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour** (לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִרְאוֹת טוֹבָה בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ, le'ekhol velishto velir'ot tovah bekhhol-amalo)—to eat, drink, and see good in all his toil.

After exposing accumulation's futility, Qoheleth offers the counter-vision: present enjoyment of God's gifts in the labor itself, not hoarding for an uncertain future. This isn't hedonism—the phrase **which God giveth him** (שֶׁנָּתַן־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים, shenatan-lo ha'elohim) frames enjoyment as receiving divine provision with gratitude. **For it is his portion** (כִּי־הוּא חֶלְקוֹ, ki-hu chelqo)—echoing 3:22, recognizing God's apportioned gift. Paul later taught similar contentment: 'Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content' (1 Timothy 6:8). This is covenantal contentment—enjoying God's daily bread rather than anxiously hoarding.

Historical Context

This reflects Israel's wilderness experience with manna—God provided daily, and hoarding produced rot (Exodus 16:19-20). Ecclesiastes applies this principle to all labor: receive today's portion with thanksgiving rather than anxious accumulation.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What difference would it make to view your daily work as 'portion' from God rather than merely means to accumulation?
2. How can you cultivate the ability to 'see good' in your present labor rather than only in imagined future outcomes?
3. In what practical ways can you receive life's simple pleasures (eating, drinking, working) as divine gifts warranting gratitude?

Interlinear Text

הַנֶּה	אֲשֶׁר	וְלֹא	וְהִנֵּה	טוֹב	אֲשֶׁר	יָפִי
H2009	H834	Behold that which I have seen	H589	it is good	H834	and comely
		H7200		H2896		H3303
לֶאֱכֹל	לְשָׁתוֹת	וְלֹא	וְהִנֵּה	טוֹב	בְּכָל	
for one to eat	and to drink	Behold that which I have seen	it is good		H3605	
H398	H8354	H7200	H2896			
עָמַל	שִׂיעַמַּל	תַּחַת	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ	מִכָּפֶר	יָמֵי	
of all his labour	that he taketh	H8478	under the sun	all	the days	
H5999	H5998		H8121	H4557	H3117	
חַי	אֲשֶׁר	נָתַן	לִי	הָאֵלֹהִים	כִּי	וְהָיָה
of his life	H834	giveth	H0	which God	H3588	H1931
H2416		H5414		H430		him for it is his portion
						H2506

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (Good): There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

Ecclesiastes 3:22 (Parallel theme): Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

1 Timothy 6:17 (References God): Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

Ecclesiastes 8:15 (References God): Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 9:7 (References God): Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

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.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (References God): 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.

Jeremiah 52:34 (Parallel theme): And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

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