

Ecclesiastes 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

Analysis

The Preacher counsels balanced perspective on providence: 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.' The Hebrew 'tovah' (טוֹבָה, prosperity/good day) and 'ra'ah' (רָעָה, adversity/evil day) represent life's ups and downs. The command to 'be joyful' in prosperity and 'consider' (ra'eh, רָאָה, see/reflect) in adversity gives different counsel for different seasons. God sovereignly ordains both blessing and trial—'set the one over against the other' (zeh le'ummat zeh, זֶה לְעִמַּת זֶה). The purpose: 'that man should find nothing after him'—humans cannot predict the future or control outcomes. This cultivates dependence on God rather than self-sufficiency. The verse teaches response to providence: receive good with gratitude, hardship with reflection, recognizing God's sovereignty in both.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom generally promised that righteousness produces prosperity and wickedness brings calamity. Yet experience (and Job's witness) complicated this formula. Ecclesiastes introduces realistic nuance: righteous people face both prosperity and adversity, and God ordains both. This doesn't mean God authors evil, but that He sovereignly permits trials serving His purposes. Joseph recognized this: 'ye thought evil... but God meant it unto good' (Genesis 50:20). Jesus taught that God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and

Additional Cross-References

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?

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (References God): Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 (Parallel theme): A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

Deuteronomy 8:3 (Parallel theme): And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Deuteronomy 28:47 (References God): Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

Isaiah 26:11 (Parallel theme): LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Psalms 119:71 (Parallel theme): It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Jeremiah 23:20 (Parallel theme): The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

Matthew 9:13 (Parallel theme): But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

James 5:13 (Parallel theme): Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.