

Ecclesiastes 7:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

Analysis

It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand (טוב אשר תאחז בזה וגם-מזה אל-תנח אֶת-יָדְךָ, tov asher te'echoz bazeh vegam-mizeh al-tanach et-yadekha)—'This' refers to both previous warnings: avoid self-righteous excess (v. 16) AND avoid presumptuous wickedness (v. 17). 'Take hold' (te'echoz) and 'withdraw not thine hand' emphasize maintaining both principles simultaneously. Biblical wisdom requires balance, not extremes.

For he that feareth God shall come forth of them all (כִּי יִרְא אֱלֹהִים יֵצֵא אֶת-כָּלֶם, ki yere Elohim yetse et-kulam)—'Feareth God' (yere Elohim) is Ecclesiastes's summary of wisdom (12:13). 'Come forth' or 'escape' (yetse) means emerging safely from both dangers. The God-fearer navigates between legalism and license, self-righteousness and presumption. This is the 'narrow way' Jesus described (Matthew 7:13-14). Galatians 5:13-25 maintains this balance: 'walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.'

Historical Context

Biblical wisdom consistently seeks the balanced path between extremes. The Law avoided both ascetic severity and libertine excess. Proverbs warns against both poverty and riches (Proverbs 30:8-9). The prophets condemned both empty ritualism (Isaiah 1:11-17) and abandoning worship (Hosea 4:6). Jesus walked this path perfectly—friend of sinners yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15); full of grace AND

truth (John 1:14). The early church navigated between Jewish legalism and Gentile antinomianism (Acts 15). Reformation theology rejected both works-righteousness and cheap grace. The Puritans pursued rigorous godliness while warning against legalistic bondage. This verse provides the interpretive key for understanding verses 16-17: neither self-righteous performance nor presumptuous sin pleases God. Only reverent, humble obedience born of faith.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you tend toward legalistic self-righteousness or presumptuous license?
How does the 'fear of God' correct your tendency?
2. What would balanced, grace-motivated obedience look like in the specific areas of your life where you struggle with extremes?

Interlinear Text

ט וֹב	אֲשֶׁר ר	תִּתְּחֵז	מִזֶּה	גַּם
It is good	H834	that thou shouldest take hold	of this yea also from this	H1571
H2896		H270	H2088	
מִזֶּה	אֶל	תִּנָּח	אֶת	יָדְךָ
of this yea also from this	H408	withdraw	H853	not thine hand
H2088		H3240	H3027	H3588
יִרְא	אֱלֹהֵי יִם	יֵצֵא	אֶת	כָּלֵם:
for he that feareth	God	shall come forth	H854	H3605
H3373	H430	H3318		

Additional Cross-References

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 8:12 (References God): Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

Ecclesiastes 11:6 (Good): In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Luke 11:42 (References God): But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Luke 1:50 (Parallel theme): And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

