

Ecclesiastes 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged—the Preacher acknowledges empirical reality: persistent sinners often enjoy long life and prosperity. The phrase 'ma'ariykh lo' (מְאֵרֶיךְ לֹא, prolonging his days) indicates extended lifespan despite wickedness, contradicting simplistic retribution theology that always equates righteousness with blessing and sin with immediate punishment.

Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God—despite observable injustices, the Preacher maintains faith commitment. The emphatic 'yodea ani' (יְדֹעַ אָנִי, I know) expresses settled conviction transcending circumstances. 'Fear God' (yare'im et-ha'Elohim, יָרָאִים אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים) means reverential awe producing covenant obedience. Ultimate well-being belongs to the God-fearer, not the prosperous sinner—a truth known by faith, not always visible in present circumstances.

Historical Context

Wisdom literature wrestled extensively with theodicy—Job, Psalms 37, 49, 73, and Habakkuk all address why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. Post-exilic Judaism faced this acutely: faithful remnant returned from exile to poverty and Persian domination while surrounding nations flourished. The Preacher doesn't resolve the tension with easy answers but maintains faith despite

observable injustices. Jesus taught similar principles: God sends rain on just and unjust alike (Matthew 5:45), yet ultimate blessing belongs to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). The early church suffered while persecutors prospered, yet maintained that 'it shall be well' with God-fearers eternally (Romans 8:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When you observe wicked people prospering while righteous people suffer, how do you maintain faith that 'it shall be well' with God-fearers?
2. What does 'fearing God' look like practically in circumstances where obedience brings hardship rather than immediate blessing?

Interlinear Text

מְאַת כְּעַשְׂרֵה חַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר
H834 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times

אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי יְדַעַת כִּי לֹא גַם וְמַאֲרֵר יְהִי
H834 and his days be prolonged H0 H3588 H1571 yet surely I know H589 H3045

מִלְּפָנָינוּ יִירְאָה אֲשֶׁר כִּי לֹא טוֹב
H1961 that it shall be well H2896 H3372 which fear God H834 which fear before
H430 H3372 H6440

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:11 (Parallel theme): But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

2 Peter 2:9 (References God): The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Ecclesiastes 7:15 (Evil): All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 (References God): I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Romans 9:22 (References God): What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

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

Romans 2:5 (References God): But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Matthew 25:34 (Parallel theme): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
