

Ecclesiastes 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.

Analysis

Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. This verse counsels political wisdom in navigating royal courts. The Hebrew bahal (בָּהָל, be hasty) warns against impulsive departure from the king's presence—whether literal (leaving court abruptly) or metaphorical (withdrawing service or loyalty rashly). Hasty reactions often worsen situations wisdom could resolve.

The parallel warning 'stand not in an evil thing' (ta'amod bedavar ra, עַמּוֹד בְּדָבָר רָא) counsels against persisting in wrong courses. When you realize you've erred—made a foolish request, taken a wrong position, or offended the king—don't stubbornly defend the mistake. Admit it and correct course. The rationale follows: **he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him**—royal authority is absolute and resisting it proves futile. This doesn't endorse tyranny but acknowledges political reality: monarchs possess power subjects lack. Wisdom navigates power dynamics with neither cowardice nor foolhardiness. This anticipates New Testament wisdom: be shrewd as serpents, innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).

Historical Context

Ancient royal courts operated with strict protocol—appearing before kings required careful etiquette (Esther 4:11). Hasty departures could be interpreted as disrespect or treason. Solomon's court included those who wisely navigated royal favor (1 Kings 4:1-6) and those who lost it through folly (1 Kings 2:13-25). The

phrase 'he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him' reflects ancient Near Eastern absolute monarchy where royal will was law. However, Israel's covenant theology limited royal authority—even kings answered to divine law (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). The tension between submitting to human authority and maintaining moral integrity remains relevant: Christians must respect authority while refusing to participate in evil (Acts 5:29).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 – God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. When facing authority you disagree with, how do you discern between hasty, impulsive resistance and principled, necessary opposition?
2. How can you practice the wisdom of 'not standing in an evil thing' by quickly acknowledging and correcting errors rather than defending them?

Interlinear Text

בְּעֵדֶב רַתְעֵמֶד תְּבֵבָה לְאַל	H408	Be not hasty	of his sight	H1980	אַל תֵּל הַמְּפִתְיוֹ	תְּבֵבָה לְאַל	H408	בְּדִבְרֵי רַתְעֵמֶד תְּבֵבָה לְאַל
	H926		H6440			H5975		H7451
בְּעֵדֶב רַתְעֵמֶד תְּבֵבָה לְאַל	H3588	אַשְׁר כֵּל	יְחִיפָּז	H834	whatsoever pleaseth	עֲשֵׂה:	H2654	בְּעֵדֶב רַתְעֵמֶד תְּבֵבָה לְאַל
	H3605			H6213	for he doeth			

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 10:4 (Parallel theme): If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

Proverbs 14:29 (Parallel theme): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Daniel 4:35 (Parallel theme): And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Daniel 5:19 (Parallel theme): And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.