

Ezekiel 7:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.

Analysis

All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. This brief verse powerfully depicts the total physical and psychological collapse that accompanies divine judgment. The imagery moves from hands (ability to act) to knees (ability to stand), showing comprehensive incapacitation when God removes strength.

All hands shall be feeble indicates inability to work, fight, or defend. Hands symbolize human agency and strength throughout Scripture. Feeble hands appear in Isaiah 35:3 as something God strengthens in restoration, but here they represent judgment reversed blessing. The universality—all hands—emphasizes no one retains strength.

All knees shall be weak as water uses vivid simile. Knees represent ability to stand firm, to remain upright under pressure. As water indicates complete liquification—utter inability to support weight. This recalls Leviticus 26:36 curse: I will send faintness into their hearts. The image appears also in Isaiah 35:3 (negative), Ezekiel 21:7 (judgment), and Hebrews 12:12 (pastoral exhortation).

From a Reformed perspective, this verse demonstrates human dependence on divine enablement. All human strength, courage, and ability derive from God sustaining grace. When He withdraws common grace in judgment, humanity collapses into complete helplessness. The passage also points to Christ who strengthens feeble hands and weak knees through His indwelling Spirit.

Historical Context

This physiological response to terror was well-documented in ancient literature and corresponds to modern understanding of acute stress response. When facing overwhelming threat, the human body can experience extreme weakness, trembling, and loss of coordination as stress hormones flood the system.

Ancient siege warfare created precisely these conditions. Prolonged starvation, constant threat, watching loved ones die, and knowing certain death or captivity approached would produce severe psychological and physical trauma. Lamentations provides eyewitness testimony of these conditions during Jerusalem final days.

The phrase appears in Babylonian conquest accounts where defeated peoples described paralysis and inability to resist. This was not unique to Israel but represented common human response to overwhelming calamity. What makes Ezekiel account distinctive is theological interpretation: this weakness comes from God actively withdrawing strength as covenant curse.

For Ezekiel original audience, hearing this prophecy before the event would have been deeply disturbing. For those who experienced it afterward, it confirmed Ezekiel credentials as true prophet whose words proved accurate in every detail.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does physical collapse under judgment teach about human dependence on God sustaining grace?
2. How do these covenant curses illuminate the nature of covenant blessings often taken for granted?

3. In what ways does Christ strengthen the hands and knees of His people?
4. What spiritual realities does physical weakness represent in this passage?
5. How should believers respond when they recognize their absolute dependence on God for strength?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	כָּל	תְּרַפֵּת יְנֵה	כָּל	בְּרַכָּה	תְּלַכְנָה	מִים:
H3605	All hands	shall be feeble	H3605	and all knees	H1980	as water
	H3027	H7503		H1290		H4325

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 21:7 (Parallel theme): And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

Hebrews 12:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

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