

Ezekiel 7:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them.

Analysis

All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. This verse depicts comprehensive demoralization and loss of strength when facing divine judgment. The physical imagery represents both literal and spiritual collapse under God wrath.

All hands shall be feeble indicates inability to fight, work, or defend oneself. Hands represent human agency, capability, and strength. When God removes His sustaining grace, human power evaporates. This echoes Leviticus 26:36 where God promises to send faintness into the hearts of covenant violators.

All knees shall be weak as water provides even more graphic imagery. Knees support the body; when they fail, one cannot stand. As water suggests complete liquefaction—total inability to maintain position. This appears in other judgment contexts (Ezekiel 21:7, Nahum 2:10) and contrasts with restoration promises where God strengthens weak knees (Isaiah 35:3, Hebrews 12:12).

The universality—all hands, all knees—emphasizes that no one retains strength when God judges. From Reformed perspective, this demonstrates absolute human dependence on divine enablement for even basic capabilities. It also points forward to Christ who strengthens His people with power from on high, enabling them to stand firm when all human strength fails.

Historical Context

This physiological response to overwhelming fear and stress was well-documented in ancient literature and warfare accounts. Modern understanding of acute stress response confirms that extreme fear can cause muscle weakness, trembling, and inability to function.

During the 586 BC siege of Jerusalem, inhabitants experienced precisely these conditions. Prolonged starvation, constant threat, watching loved ones die, and facing certain destruction produced severe trauma. Lamentations provides eyewitness testimony: Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine (Lamentations 5:10).

Ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts frequently describe defeated peoples as unable to resist, paralyzed with fear. What distinguishes Ezekiel account is theological interpretation: this weakness comes directly from God withdrawing strength as covenant curse, not merely from human circumstances.

For Ezekiel original audience hearing this before 586 BC, the prophecy warned of coming collapse. For those who experienced it, the prophecy exact fulfillment validated Ezekiel credentials as true prophet whose every word proved accurate.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does this comprehensive weakness reveal about human dependence on God sustaining grace?
2. How do covenant curses like this illuminate blessings that believers often take for granted?

3. In what ways does Christ strengthen believers when human strength completely fails?
4. What spiritual realities does physical incapacitation represent in divine judgment?
5. How should recognition of absolute dependence on God shape Christian living?

Interlinear Text

וַצַּב י	עֲדִין	לְגֹא וְ	שָׁמָּה הוּ	וַצַּלְמֵי י
As for the beauty	of his ornament	it in majesty	he set	the images
H6643	H5716	H1347	H7760	H6754
תּוֹעֲבֹתָם	שְׁקֻצֵיהֶם	כֹּה עָשׂוּ	בְּ	עַל
of their abominations	and of their detestable things	but they made	H0	H5921
H8441	H8251	H6213		H3651
נָתַתִּי יוֹ	לְנֶדֶחַ: לָהֶם			
therein therefore have I set	H0	it far		
H5414		H5079		

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 24:21 (Parallel theme): Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

Jeremiah 7:30 (Parallel theme): For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

Isaiah 64:11 (Parallel theme): Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

Ezekiel 9:7 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

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