

Proverbs 14:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

Analysis

This proverb addresses the paradox of temporary pleasure and lasting sorrow. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful" reveals hidden pain. Gam-bishoq yikh'av-lev (גָם־בִּשׁוֹק יִקְהַב־לֵב), even in laughter the heart is pained). Sechoq (שִׁחֹק, laughter) masks ka'av (קָאָב, pain, grief) in lev (לֵב, heart). Outward mirth doesn't guarantee inner joy.

"And the end of that mirth is heaviness" exposes superficiality's outcome. Ve'acharitah simchah tugah (וְאַחֲרִיתָה שִׁמְחָה תָּגַה), and its end—mirth—sorrow). Acharit (אַחֲרִית, end, outcome, afterward) of simchah (שִׁמְחָה, joy, gladness) is tugah (תָּגַה, grief, sorrow). Apparent happiness concludes in sadness.

The proverb warns against superficial pleasure divorced from genuine joy. Ecclesiastes 2:2 says of laughter: "It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" Worldly pleasures provide temporary relief but don't address deep heart needs. Genuine joy comes from knowing God. Psalm 16:11 promises fullness of joy in God's presence. Jesus offered living water that satisfies eternally (John 4:13-14). Philippians 4:4 commands rejoicing in the Lord always—a joy rooted in relationship with Christ that transcends circumstances. Worldly mirth ends in heaviness; godly joy endures even through suffering (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Historical Context

Ancient feasts and celebrations provided temporary escape from life's hardships. Yet underneath revelry often lay unresolved pain. Ecclesiastes explores this theme —Solomon's pursuit of pleasure ultimately proved empty (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11). Hedonistic cultures like Rome offered bread and circuses, distracting from spiritual poverty. This proverb cuts through shallow optimism, exposing the heart's deep need for genuine joy found only in God.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. In what ways might you be using entertainment, humor, or activities to mask underlying sorrow rather than addressing it?
2. How does superficial happiness differ from the deep joy that comes from relationship with God through Christ?
3. What would it look like to pursue genuine joy in the Lord rather than fleeting mirth that ends in heaviness?

Interlinear Text

גַם בְּשִׁחָךְ לְבִבְּרִית הַשְׁמָמָה
H1571 Even in laughter is sorrowful the heart and the end of that mirth
H7814 H3510 H3820 H319 H8057

תֹּזֶגֶה:
is heaviness
H8424

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 2:2 (Parallel theme): I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

James 4:9 (Parallel theme): Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

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