

Proverbs 16:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Analysis

Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

This verse presents a foundational principle for godly living: consecrating our activities to God results in mental and spiritual stability. The Hebrew verb "commit" (לָגַל/ḡol) literally means "roll" or "roll away"—a vivid image of transferring a burden. The word appears in Psalm 37:5 with identical usage: "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." The imagery suggests taking the weight of our plans, projects, and responsibilities and rolling them onto God's shoulders, much as one might roll a heavy stone off oneself onto another.

This "rolling" implies both trust and surrender. We cannot simultaneously carry a burden ourselves and roll it onto another—the act requires releasing our grip, abandoning our claim to independent control, and trusting God to handle what we've given Him. The command is not merely to acknowledge God or seek His blessing while retaining ultimate control, but to genuinely transfer ownership and trust Him with outcomes.

"Thy works" (מַעֲשֶׂיךָ/ma'asekha) encompasses all our doings, endeavors, and projects—our daily labor, ministry efforts, business ventures, relationships, creative pursuits. Nothing lies outside this commitment's scope. The verse does not distinguish between "sacred" and "secular" activities; all legitimate work becomes worship when committed to God. This reflects the biblical worldview that all of life belongs to God, and every righteous activity can glorify Him when done

in faith and offered to Him.

The result—"thy thoughts shall be established" (יִכְּנוּ מַחְשְׁבוֹתֶיךָ/ yikkonu machshevotekha)—promises mental and spiritual stability. The verb כּוֹן (kun) means to be firmly established, fixed, secured, or made stable. When we commit our works to God, our anxious thoughts settle, our plans align with His purposes, and our minds find rest in His sovereignty. The term "thoughts" (מַחְשְׁבוֹת/ machshavot) includes plans, intentions, purposes, and mental deliberations—the internal world that drives our external actions. God establishes our inner life when we surrender our outer activities to Him.

This reflects a profound spiritual principle: mental peace and clarity flow from trust, not control. Our thoughts remain unstable when we bear the weight of outcomes ourselves, constantly recalculating, worrying, and anxiously managing. But when we commit our works to God—trusting His wisdom, timing, and sovereignty—our thoughts stabilize because they rest on the unmovable foundation of God's faithfulness rather than our limited capacity.

Historical Context

Proverbs 16 begins the third major collection in the book (chapters 16:1-22:16), characterized by explicit theological statements about God's sovereignty and human response. These proverbs particularly emphasize divine providence, contrasting human planning with God's ultimate control. The chapter opens with "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (v.1) and continues with affirmations of God's sovereignty over human affairs, making verse 3 part of this sustained theological emphasis.

Ancient Israelite society operated under theocratic principles—God ruled as ultimate King, and all earthly authority derived from Him. This shaped how Israelites understood work, success, and planning. Unlike modern secular perspectives that see success as merely the product of human effort, skill, and favorable circumstances, biblical wisdom recognized God's active involvement in all outcomes. The farmer planted and watered, but God gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7, though written later, reflects this enduring biblical principle).

The merchant traveled and traded, but God determined whether the venture succeeded.

This verse particularly addresses the anxiety of planning and the burden of responsibility. In an agricultural economy vulnerable to weather, pests, and political instability, Israelites faced constant uncertainty. Drought could devastate years of work. Foreign armies could plunder accumulated wealth. Sickness could prevent harvest. The command to "commit works to the LORD" offered profound comfort: though outcomes remain uncertain from our perspective, God oversees all, and trusting Him brings peace that transcends circumstances.

The wisdom tradition from which Proverbs emerges valued both human initiative and divine dependence. Wisdom literature never counsels passivity or fatalism—God's sovereignty does not negate human responsibility to work diligently, plan wisely, and act righteously. Rather, this verse calls for holding our plans with open hands, pursuing excellence while trusting God with results, and finding peace in His providence rather than anxiety about our performance. This balanced perspective shaped how faithful Israelites approached daily labor and long-term planning.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What specific works or projects are you currently carrying that need to be 'rolled' onto the LORD rather than carried through anxious self-reliance?
2. How do you distinguish between wise planning and diligent effort (which God commands) versus anxious control and self-dependent striving (which prevents committing works to God)?
3. In what ways have you experienced mental and spiritual instability when bearing the weight of outcomes yourself, and how did trusting God bring stability to your thoughts?

4. How can you cultivate the habit of consecrating even routine daily tasks to God, viewing all legitimate work as worship rather than dividing life into sacred and secular categories?
5. What does it look like practically to commit works to God while still taking responsibility for faithful effort—how do you hold both without falling into either presumption or anxiety?

Interlinear Text

ל	אֶל	יְהוָה	מַעַשֶׁי יָךְ	יִכְנוּ	מִחְשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:
Commit	H413	unto the LORD	thy works	shall be established	and thy thoughts
H1556		H3068	H4639	H3559	H4284

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 3:6 (Parallel theme): In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Psalms 55:22 (References Lord): Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Philippians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

1 Peter 5:7 (Parallel theme): Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Job 5:8 (Parallel theme): I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:

Job 22:28 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.

Luke 12:22 (Parallel theme): And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.