Ecclesiastes

1 These are the words of the Teacher,* the son
of David, king in Jerusalem:

2 “Futility† of futilities,”
says the Teacher,
“futility of futilities!
Everything is futile!”

3 What does a man gain from all his labor,
at which he toils under the sun?
4 Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.
5 The sun rises and the sun sets;
it hurries back to where it rises.
6 The wind blows southward,
then turns northward;
round and round it swirls,
ever returning on its course.
7 All the rivers flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full;
to the place from which the streams come,
there again they flow.

8 All things are wearisome,
more than one can describe;

* **1:1 1:1** Or *the Convener* or *the Preacher* or *the leader of the assembly*; Hebrew *Qoheleth* is rendered as *the Teacher* throughout Ecclesiastes. † **1:2 1:2** Literally *vapor* or *breath*; the Hebrew words translated in Ecclesiastes as forms of *futile* or *fleeting* can also be translated as *vanity* or *meaningless*.

the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear content with hearing.
9 What has been will be again,
and what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.
10 Is there a case where one can say,
“Look, this is new”?
It has already existed
in the ages before us.
11 There is no remembrance
of those who came before,
and those yet to come will not be remembered
by those who follow after.

12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
13 And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a miserable task God has laid upon the sons of men to occupy them!
14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun, and have found them all to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

15 What is crooked cannot be straightened,
and what is lacking cannot be counted.
16 I said to myself, “Behold, I have grown and increased in wisdom beyond all those before me who were over Jerusalem, and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.”
17 So I set my mind to know wisdom and madness and folly; I learned that this, too, is a pursuit of the wind.

18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow,
and as knowledge grows, grief increases.

2

1 I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you
with pleasure; enjoy what is good!”
But it proved to be futile.
2 I said of laughter, “It is folly,” and of pleasure,
“What does it accomplish?”
3 I sought to cheer my body with wine and to
embrace folly—my mind still guiding me with
wisdom—until I could see what was worthwhile
for men to do under heaven during the few days
of their lives.
4 I expanded my pursuits. I built houses and
planted vineyards for myself.
5 I made gardens and parks for myself, where
I planted all kinds of fruit trees.
6 I built reservoirs to water my groves of
flourishing trees.
7 I acquired male and female slaves, and
slaves were born in my house. I also owned
more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem
before me,
8 and I accumulated for myself silver and gold
and the treasure of kings and provinces. I
gathered to myself male and female singers, and
the delights of the sons of men—many
concubines.
9 So I became great and surpassed all in
Jerusalem who had preceded me; and my
wisdom remained with me.

10 Anything my eyes desired, I did not deny
myself. I refused my heart no pleasure. For my
heart took delight in all my work, and this was
the reward for all my labor.

11 Yet when I considered all the works that my
hands had accomplished and what I had toiled
to achieve, I found everything to be futile, a
pursuit of the wind; there was nothing to be
gained under the sun.

12 Then I turned to consider wisdom and
madness and folly; for what more can the king's
successor do than what has already been
accomplished?
13 And I saw that wisdom exceeds folly, just as
light exceeds darkness:

14 The wise man has eyes in his head,
but the fool walks in darkness.

Yet I also came to realize that one fate
overcomes them both.
15 So I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will
also befall me. What then have I gained by
being wise?"

And I said to myself that this too is futile.

16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the
wise, just as with the fool, seeing that both will
be forgotten in the days to come. Alas, the wise
man will die just like the fool!
17 So I hated life, because the work that is
done under the sun was grievous to me. For
everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

18 I hated all for which I had toiled under the
sun, because I must leave it to the man who
comes after me.
19 And who knows whether that man will be
wise or foolish? Yet he will take over all the
labor at which I have worked skillfully under
the sun. This too is futile.
20 So my heart began to despair over all the
labor that I had done under the sun.
21 When there is a man who has labored with
wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give
his portion to a man who has not worked for it,
this too is futile and a great evil.
22 For what does a man get for all the toil and
striving with which he labors under the sun?
23 Indeed, all his days are filled with grief, and
his task is sorrowful; even at night, his mind
does not rest. This too is futile.
24 Nothing is better for a man than to eat and
drink and enjoy his work. I have also seen that
this is from the hand of God.
25 For apart from me,* who can eat and who
can find enjoyment?
26 To the man who is pleasing in his sight, he
gives wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the
sinner he assigns the task of gathering and
accumulating that which he will hand over to
one who pleases God. This too is futile and a
pursuit of the wind.

3

1 To everything there is a season,

* **2:25 2:25** Leningrad Codex and most Hebrew manuscripts; some Hebrew manuscripts, LXX, Syriac *apart from him*

and a time for every purpose under heaven:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to break down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to cast away stones and a time to gather
stones together,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain
from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to count as lost,
a time to keep and a time to discard,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
9 What does the worker gain from his toil?
10 I have seen the burden that God has laid
upon the sons of men to occupy them.
11 He has made everything beautiful in its
time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of
men, yet they cannot fathom the work that God
has done from beginning to end.
12 I know that there is nothing better for them
than to rejoice and do good while they live,
13 and also that every man should eat and
drink and find satisfaction in all his labor—this
is the gift of God.
14 I know that everything God does endures
forever; nothing can be added to it or taken
from it. God does it so that they should fear him.

15 What exists has already been, and what will
be has already been, for God will call to account
what has passed.
16 Furthermore, I saw under the sun that in
the place of judgment there is wickedness, and
in the place of righteousness there is
wickedness.
17 I said in my heart, “God will judge the
righteous and the wicked, since there is a time
for every activity and every deed.”
18 I said to myself, “As for the sons of men, God
tests them so that they may see for themselves
that they are but beasts.”
19 For the fates of both men and beasts are the
same: As one dies, so dies the other—they all
have the same breath.* Man has no advantage
over the animals, since everything is futile.
20 All go to one place; all come from dust, and
all return to dust.
21 Who knows if the spirit of man rises
upward and the spirit of the animal descends
into the earth?
22 I have seen that there is nothing better for a
man than to enjoy his work, because that is his
lot. For who can bring him to see what will
come after him?

4

1 Again I looked, and I considered all the
oppression taking place under the sun. I saw the
tears of the oppressed, and they had no

* **3:19 3:19** Or *spirit*

comforter; the power lay in the hands of their
oppressors, and there was no comforter.
2 So I admired the dead, who had already died,
above the living, who are still alive.
3 But better than both is he who has not yet
existed, who has not seen the evil that is done
under the sun.
4 I saw that all labor and success spring from a
man's envy of his neighbor. This too is futile and
a pursuit of the wind.

5 The fool folds his hands
and consumes his own flesh.
6 Better one handful with tranquility
than two handfuls with toil and pursuit of
the wind.
7 Again, I saw futility under the sun.
8 There is a man all alone, without even a son
or brother. And though there is no end to his
labor, his eye is still not content* with his wealth:
"For whom do I toil and deprive myself of
enjoyment?" This too is futile—a miserable task.
9 Two are better than one, because they have a
good return for their labor.
10 For if one falls down, his companion can lift
him up; but pity the one who falls without
another to help him up!
11 Again, if two lie down together, they will
keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?
12 And though one may be overpowered, two
can resist. Moreover, a cord of three strands is
not quickly broken.

* **4:8 4:8** Qere; Ketiv *his eyes are*

13 Better is a poor but wise youth than an old
but foolish king who no longer knows how to
take a warning.
14 For the youth has come from the prison to
the kingship, though he was born poor in his
own kingdom.

15 I saw that all who lived and walked under
the sun followed this second one, the youth who
succeeded the king.
16 There is no limit to all the people who were
before them. Yet the successor will not be
celebrated by those who come even later. This
too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

17 Guard your steps when you go to the house
of God. Draw near to listen rather than to offer
the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they
do wrong.

5

1 Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty
in your heart to utter a word before God. For
God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let
your words be few.

2 As a dream comes through many cares,
so the speech of a fool comes with many
words.

3 When you make a vow to God, do not delay
in fulfilling it, because he takes no pleasure in
fools. Fulfill your vow.
4 It is better not to vow than to make a vow
and not fulfill it.

5 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin,
and do not tell the messenger* that your vow
was a mistake. Why should God be angry with
your words and destroy the work of your hands?
6 For as many dreams bring futility, so do
many words. Therefore, fear God.
7 If you see the oppression of the poor and the
denial of justice and righteousness in the
province, do not be astonished at the matter; for
one official is watched by a superior, and others
higher still are over them.
8 The produce of the earth is taken by all; the
king himself profits from the fields.
9 He who loves money is never satisfied by
money, and he who loves wealth is never
satisfied by income. This too is futile.
10 When good things increase, so do those who
consume them; what then is the profit to the
owner, except to behold them with his eyes?
11 The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether
he eats little or much, but the abundance of the
rich man permits him no sleep.
12 There is a grievous evil I have seen under
the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its
owner,
13 or wealth lost in a failed venture, so when
that man has a son there is nothing to pass on.
14 As a man came from his mother's womb, so
he will depart again, naked as he arrived. He
takes nothing for his labor to carry in his hands.

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* **5:5 5:5** Or *angel*

15 This too is a grievous affliction: Exactly as a
man is born, so he will depart. What does he
gain as he toils for the wind?
16 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness,
with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

17 Here is what I have seen to be good and
fitting: to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction
in all the labor one does under the sun during
the few days of life that God has given him—for
this is his lot.
18 Furthermore, God has given riches and
wealth to every man, and he has enabled him to
enjoy them, to accept his lot, and to rejoice in his
labor. This is a gift from God.
19 For a man seldom considers the days of his
life, because God keeps him occupied with the
joy of his heart.

6

1 There is another evil I have seen under the
sun, and it weighs heavily upon mankind:
2 God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor,
so that he lacks nothing his heart desires; but
God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a
stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a
grievous affliction.

3 A man may father a hundred children and
live for many years; yet no matter how long he
lives, if he is unsatisfied with his prosperity and
does not even receive a proper burial, I say that
a stillborn child is better off than he.

4 For a stillborn child enters in futility and
departs in darkness, and his name is shrouded
in obscurity.
5 The child, though neither seeing the sun nor
knowing anything, has more rest than that man,
6 even if he lives a thousand years twice over
but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to
the same place?

7 All a man's labor is for his mouth,
yet his appetite is never satisfied.*
8 What advantage, then, has the wise man over
the fool? What gain comes to the poor man who
knows how to conduct himself before others?
9 Better what the eye can see than the
wandering of desire. This too is futile and a
pursuit of the wind.
10 Whatever exists was named long ago, and it
is known what man is; but he cannot contend
with one stronger than he.
11 For the more words, the more futility—and
how does that profit anyone?
12 For who knows what is good for a man
during the few days in which he passes through
his fleeting life like a shadow? Who can tell a
man what will come after him under the sun?

7

1 A good name is better than fine perfume,
and one's day of death is better than his day
of birth.
2 It is better to enter a house of mourning

* **6:7 6:7** Hebrew *filled*

than a house of feasting,
since death is the end of every man,
and the living should take this to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
for a sad countenance is good for the heart.
4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

5 It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke
than to listen to the song of fools.
6 For like the crackling of thorns under the pot,
so is the laughter of the fool. This too is futile.

7 Surely extortion turns a wise man into a fool,
and a bribe corrupts the heart.
8 The end of a matter is better than the beginning,
and a patient spirit is better than a proud one.

9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit,
for anger settles in the lap of a fool.*
10 Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?"
For it is unwise of you to ask about this.

11 Wisdom, like an inheritance, is good,
and it benefits those who see the sun.
12 For wisdom, like money, is a shelter,

* **7:9 7:9** Hebrew *in the bosom of fools*

and the advantage of knowledge
is that wisdom preserves the life of its
owner.

13 Consider the work of God:
Who can straighten what he has bent?
14 In the day of prosperity, be joyful,
but in the day of adversity, consider this:
God has made one of these along with the other,
so that a man cannot discover
anything that will come after him.
15 In my futile life I have seen both of these:

A righteous man perishing in his
righteousness,
and a wicked man living long in his
wickedness.
16 Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?
17 Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?
18 It is good to grasp the one and not let the other slip from your hand. For he who fears God will follow both warnings.†

19 Wisdom makes the wise man
stronger than ten rulers in a city.
20 Surely there is no righteous man on earth
who does good and never sins.

† **7:18 7:18** Or *will avoid all extremes*

21 Do not pay attention to every word that is
spoken, or you may hear your servant cursing
you.
22 For you know in your heart that many times
you yourself have cursed others.
23 All this I tested by wisdom, saying, “I resolve
to be wise.” But it was beyond me.
24 What exists is out of reach and very deep.
Who can fathom it?
25 I directed my mind to understand, to
explore, to search out wisdom and explanations,
and to understand the stupidity of wickedness
and the folly of madness.
26 And I find more bitter than death the
woman who is a snare, whose heart is a net, and
whose hands are chains. The man who pleases
God escapes her, but the sinner is ensnared.
27 “Behold,” says the Teacher, “I have
discovered this by adding one thing to another
to find an explanation.
28 While my soul was still searching but not
finding, among a thousand I have found one
man, but among all these I have not found one
such woman.
29 Only this have I found: I have discovered
that God made mankind upright, but they have
sought out many schemes.”

8

1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the
interpretation of a matter? A man’s wisdom
brightens his face, and the sternness of his face
is changed.

2 Keep the king's command, I say, because of
your oath before God.
3 Do not hasten to leave his presence, and do
not persist in a bad cause, for he will do
whatever he pleases.
4 For the king's word is supreme, and who can
say to him, "What are you doing?"
5 Whoever keeps his command will come to no
harm, and a wise heart knows the right time
and procedure.
6 For there is a right time and procedure to
every purpose, though a man's misery weighs
heavily upon him.
7 Since no one knows what will happen, who
can tell him what is to come?
8 As no man has power over the wind to
contain it, so no one has authority over his day
of death. As no one can be discharged in
wartime, so wickedness will not release those
who practice it.
9 All this I have seen, applying my mind to
every deed that is done under the sun; there is a
time when one man lords it over another to his
own detriment.
10 Then too, I saw the burial of the wicked who
used to go in and out of the holy place, and they
were soon forgotten* in the city where they had
done so. This too is futile.
11 When the sentence for a crime is not
speedily executed, the hearts of men become
fully set on doing evil.

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* **8:10 8:10** Leningrad Codex and most Hebrew manuscripts; some Hebrew manuscripts, LXX, and Vulgate *they were praised*

12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times
and still lives long, yet I also know that it will go
well with those who fear God, who are reverent
in his presence.
13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it
will not go well with them, and their days will
not lengthen like a shadow.
14 There is a futility that is done on the earth:
There are righteous men who get what the
actions of the wicked deserve, and there are
wicked men who get what the actions of the
righteous deserve. I say that this too is futile.
15 So I commended the enjoyment of life,
because there is nothing better for a man under
the sun than to eat and drink and be merry. For
this joy will accompany him in his labor during
the days of his life that God gives him under the
sun.
16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom
and to observe the task that one performs on the
earth—though his eyes do not see sleep in the
day or even in the night—
17 I saw every work of God, and that a man is
unable to comprehend the work that is done
under the sun. Despite his efforts to search it
out, he cannot find its meaning; even if the wise
man claims to know, he is unable to
comprehend.

9

1 So I took all this to heart and concluded that
the righteous and the wise, as well as their
deeds, are in God's hands. Man does not know
what lies ahead, whether love or hate.

2 It is the same for all: There is a common fate
for the righteous and the wicked, for the good,*
for the clean and the unclean, for the one who
sacrifices and the one who does not. As it is for
the good, so it is for the sinner; as it is for the
one who makes a vow, so it is for the one who
refuses to take a vow.
3 This is an evil in everything that is done
under the sun: There is one fate for everyone.
Furthermore, the hearts of men are full of evil
and madness while they are alive, and
afterward they join the dead.
4 There is hope, however, for anyone who is
among the living;† for even a live dog is better
than a dead lion.
5 For the living know that they will die, but the
dead know nothing. They have no further
reward, because the memory of them is
forgotten.
6 Their love, their hate, and their envy have
already vanished, and they will never again
have a share in all that is done under the sun.
7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your
wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already
approved your works:
8 Let your garments always be white,
and never spare the oil for your head.
9 Enjoy life with your beloved wife all the days
of the fleeting‡ life that God has given you under
the sun—all your fleeting days. For this is your
portion in life and in your labor under the sun.

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* **9:2 9:2** LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate add *and the bad* † **9:4 9:4** Qere; Ketiv *whoever is chosen* ‡ **9:9 9:9** Or *futile*; twice in this verse

10 Whatever you find to do with your hands,
do it with all your might, for in Sheol, where you
are going, there is no work or planning or
knowledge or wisdom.
11 I saw something else under the sun: The
race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the
strong; neither is the bread to the wise, nor the
wealth to the intelligent, nor the favor to the
skillful. For time and chance happen to all.
12 For surely no man knows his time: Like fish
caught in a cruel net or birds trapped in a snare,
so men are ensnared in an evil time that
suddenly falls upon them.
13 I have also seen this wisdom under the sun,
and it was great to me:
14 There was a small city with few men. A
mighty king came against it, surrounded it, and
built large siege ramps against it.
15 Now a poor wise man was found in the city,
and he saved the city by his wisdom. Yet no one
remembered that poor man.
16 And I said, “Wisdom is better than strength,
but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and
his words are not heeded.”

17 The calm words of the wise are heeded
over the shouts of a ruler among fools.
18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
but one sinner destroys much good.

10

1 As dead flies bring a stench to the perfumer’s
oil,

so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
2 A wise man's heart inclines to the right,
but the heart of a fool to the left.
3 Even as the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking,
and he shows everyone that he is a fool.
4 If the ruler's temper flares against you, do not abandon your post,
for calmness lays great offenses to rest.

5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun—
an error that proceeds from the ruler:
6 Folly is appointed to great heights,
but the rich sit in lowly positions.
7 I have seen slaves on horseback,
while princes go on foot like slaves.

8 He who digs a pit may fall into it,
and he who breaches a wall may be bitten by a snake.
9 The one who quarries stones may be injured by them,
and he who splits logs endangers himself.
10 If the axe is dull and the blade unsharpened,
more strength must be exerted,
but skill produces success.
11 If the snake bites before it is charmed,
there is no profit for the charmer.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,
but the lips of a fool consume him.
13 The beginning of his talk is folly,
and the end of his speech is evil madness.

14 Yet the fool multiplies words.
No one knows what is coming,
and who can tell him what will come after him?
15 The toil of a fool wearies him,
for he does not know the way to the city.

16 Woe to you, O land whose king is a servant,*
and whose princes feast in the morning.
17 Blessed are you, O land whose king is a son of nobles,
and whose princes feast at the proper time—
for strength and not for drunkenness.

18 Through laziness the roof caves in,
and in the hands of the idle, the house leaks.

19 A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life merry,
but money is the answer for everything.

20 Do not curse the king even in your thoughts,
or curse the rich even in your bedroom,
for a bird of the air may carry your words,
and a winged creature may report your speech.

11

1 Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it again.

* **10:16 10:16** Or *a youth*

2 Divide your portion among seven, or even
eight,
for you do not know what disaster may
befall the land.

3 If the clouds are full,
they will pour out rain upon the earth;
whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where it falls, there it will lie.
4 He who watches the wind will fail to sow,
and he who observes the clouds will fail to
reap.

5 As you do not know the way the spirit comes to
the bones*
in a mother's womb,
so you cannot understand the work of God,
the Maker of all things.
6 Sow your seed in the morning,
and do not rest your hands in the evening,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that, or if both will equally
prosper.
7 Light is sweet,
and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.
8 So if a man lives many years,
let him rejoice in them all.
But let him remember the days of darkness,
for they will be many.
Everything to come is futile.

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* **11:5 11:5** Or *As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the bones are formed*

9 Rejoice, O young man, while you are young,
and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.
Walk in the ways of your heart
and in the sight of your eyes,
but know that for all these things
God will bring you to judgment.
10 So banish sorrow from your heart,
and cast off pain from your body,
for youth and vigor are fleeting.†

12

1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,
before the days of adversity come
and the years approach of which you will say,
"I find no pleasure in them,"
2 before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is darkened,
and the clouds return after the rain,
3 on the day the keepers of the house tremble
and the strong men stoop,
when those grinding cease because they are few
and those watching through windows see dimly,
4 when the doors to the street are shut
and the sound of the mill fades away,
when one rises at the sound of a bird
and all the daughters of song grow faint,
5 when men fear the heights and dangers of the road,
when the almond tree blossoms,

† **11:10 11:10** Or *futile*

the grasshopper loses its spring,
and the caper berry shrivels—
for then man goes to his eternal home
and mourners walk the streets.

6 Remember him before the silver cord is
snapped*
and the golden bowl is crushed,
before the pitcher is shattered at the spring
and the wheel is broken at the well,
7 before the dust returns to the ground from
which it came
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

8 "Futility of futilities," says the Teacher.
"Everything is futile!"
9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught the people knowledge; he pondered, searched out, and arranged many proverbs.
10 The Teacher searched to find delightful sayings and to record accurate words of truth.†
11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the anthologies of the masters are like firmly embedded nails driven by a single shepherd.
12 And by these, my son, be further warned: There is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body.
13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.

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* **12:6 12:6** Qere; Ketiv *is removed* † **12:10 12:10** Or *and sought to write what was upright and true*

14 For God will bring every deed into
judgment, along with every hidden thing,
whether good or evil.

Masoretic English Tanakh

The Tanakh (Law, Prophets, and Writings) of the Holy Bible in English, conformed to the Masoretic Text.

Public Domain

Language: English

Dialect: American

Extracted from the Berean Standard Bible 2026 and conformed to the Masoretic Text, as represented by the Westminster Leningrad Codex by David Kaye. Dedicated by David Kaye to the Public Domain 13 October 2026. The base Berean Standard Version was dedicated to the Public Domain by their translation team.

2026-11-06

PDF generated using Haiola and XeLaTeX on 6 Nov 2026 from source files dated 6 Nov 2026
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