

Job 20:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue;

Analysis

'Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue.' Zophar describes how the wicked savor sin: 'wickedness' (רָעָה, ra'ah) is 'sweet' (יָמְתִּיק, yamtiq) in his mouth, hidden under his tongue (תָּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ, tachat leshono). The imagery: rolling sin like a delicacy on the palate. This echoes Proverbs 9:17 —'stolen waters are sweet.' Sin does offer temporary pleasure (Hebrews 11:25), which makes it tempting. Zophar's theology is accurate: people do enjoy sin momentarily. His application to Job is unfounded: assuming Job secretly savors wickedness. Without evidence, this is slander. The Reformed understanding of indwelling sin acknowledges ongoing struggle without assuming specific secret wickedness in others.

Historical Context

Ancient peoples used taste metaphors for moral experiences. Zophar employs this to suggest Job secretly enjoys hidden sins, using orthodox theology to make unproven accusations.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do we acknowledge sin's temporary pleasure without excusing it or falsely accusing others?
2. What is the difference between teaching general truth about sin and making specific accusations?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר בְּלֵב לְבָדְךָ הַשְׁמִת יְמִינָה
H518 be sweet H4985 in his mouth H6310 Though wickedness H7451 though he hide H3582 H8478

לְשָׁנוֹן:

it under his tongue

H3956

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 10:7 (Parallel theme): His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Job 15:16 (Parallel theme): How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Proverbs 20:17 (Parallel theme): Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Genesis 3:6 (Parallel theme): And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

