

Proverbs 10:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Analysis

This proverb exposes two forms of foolish speech: hypocritical concealment and slanderous exposure. "He that hideth hatred with lying lips" describes the flatterer who masks animosity behind false pleasantries. Mekasseh sin'ah (מַכְסֵּה שִׁנְאָה, covering hatred) with siftey shaqer (שִׁפְתֵי שָׁקֶר, lying lips) creates deceptive relationships. This person smiles while plotting harm, violating both truthfulness and love.

"He that uttereth a slander" represents the opposite extreme—malicious exposure. Motsi dibbah (מוֹצִי דִבָּה, bringing forth slander) spreads harmful reports, whether true or false, to damage reputation. Both behaviors reveal the same verdict: "is a fool" (kesil, כֶּסֶל)—someone morally and intellectually deficient.

The proverb warns against speech extremes. One hides truth harmfully (lying), the other speaks truth harmfully (slandering). Neither honors God nor loves neighbor. Leviticus 19:16-18 forbids both: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer... neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour" and "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart." Jesus commands loving enemies and speaking truth in love (Matthew 5:44, Ephesians 4:15). Genuine wisdom speaks honestly with redemptive intent.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern honor-shame cultures made reputation crucial. Slander could destroy social standing, economic opportunities, and family honor. The ninth commandment prohibits false witness (Exodus 20:16), and Mosaic law prescribed severe penalties for false accusations. Conversely, hiding hatred with flattery was equally dangerous—political intrigue, palace coups, and assassinations often began with feigned friendship. Both behaviors undermined the covenant community's integrity.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Are there situations where you hide negative feelings behind pleasant words rather than speaking truth in love?
2. How can we balance honesty about others' faults with the command not to slander or gossip?
3. What motivates slander, and how does the gospel address the heart issues that produce malicious speech?

Interlinear Text

הַמְכִסֵּה	שִׂנְאָה	שִׁפְתָי	שֶׁקֶר	וּמוֹצֵא	דָּבָר
He that hideth	hatred	lips	with lying	and he that uttereth	a slander
H3680	H8135	H8193	H8267	H3318	H1681

וְהוּא	כְּסִיל:
H1931	is a fool
	H3684

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 55:21 (Parallel theme): The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Psalms 15:3 (Parallel theme): He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

2 Samuel 3:27 (Parallel theme): And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

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