

Proverbs 10:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish:
but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

Analysis

This proverb establishes God's sovereign providence over the righteous and wicked. The Hebrew *ra'ev* (רָעֵב, "to famish") denotes extreme hunger and deprivation. The LORD (Yahweh) actively intervenes—"will not suffer" (*lo-yariv*, לֹא־רָעֵב) demonstrates divine commitment to sustain His people. This echoes Psalm 37:25: "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

The contrast reveals two destinies: God preserves the righteous from spiritual and physical starvation, while He "casteth away" (*yadach*, יָדַח, meaning to thrust away, reject) the "substance" (*havvah*, הַבָּה, desire or craving) of the wicked. Their wealth and desires ultimately fail them. Reformed theology sees this as common grace tempered by divine justice—the wicked may prosper temporarily, but God ensures their substance does not satisfy eternally.

Jesus echoes this principle in Matthew 6:25-33, urging disciples not to worry about provisions because the Father knows their needs. The truly righteous hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and shall be filled—not with temporal bread alone, but with Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

Historical Context

Solomon wrote during Israel's golden age (c. 970-931 BC), when covenant faithfulness brought material blessing under the Mosaic economy. The agricultural society depended on God's provision through seasonal rains and harvests. Famine

was both a natural disaster and often divine judgment (Deuteronomy 28:15-24). This proverb would have resonated deeply with Israelites who understood God's covenant promises of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to sustain the righteous comfort you when facing material need or uncertainty?
2. In what ways might we rely on our own 'substance' rather than trusting God's provision?
3. How does Jesus as the Bread of Life fulfill this proverb's deeper spiritual meaning?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	יִרְעֶב	יְהִי	הַנֶּה	נַפְשׁ	צַדִּיק	וּבָרֵת	רַשְׁעָם
H3808	to famish	The LORD	the soul	of the righteous	the substance	of the wicked	
H7456		H3068	H5315	H6662	H1942	H7563	

:נָפְךִּי

but he casteth away

H1920

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:25 (Righteousness): I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Psalms 37:3 (References Lord): Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Psalms 33:19 (Parallel theme): To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Psalms 37:19 (Evil): They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Zephaniah 1:18 (References Lord): Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Job 5:20 (Parallel theme): In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.

Isaiah 33:16 (Parallel theme): He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

Luke 12:31 (Parallel theme): But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Psalms 112:10 (Evil): The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

Job 20:28 (Parallel theme): The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.