

Proverbs 13:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Analysis

This proverb uses light imagery to contrast the destinies of righteous and wicked. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth" depicts flourishing life. Or tsaddiqim yismach (צדיקים ישמחו, אָזְרָצְדִיקִים יִשְׁמַחְתּוּ), the light of the righteous rejoices). Light symbolizes life, truth, blessing, and God's presence. The righteous person's light doesn't merely shine—it yismach (ישמח, rejoices, is glad), suggesting vibrant, increasing illumination.

"But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" announces doom. Ner resha'im yid'akh (נר רשאים יידעך, the lamp of the wicked is extinguished). While the righteous have or (אור, light—sun, natural illumination), the wicked have only ner (נר, lamp—artificial, temporary). And even that flickers and dies. Extinguishment means death, judgment, and divine abandonment.

Throughout Scripture, light represents God's favor and life. Psalm 97:11 declares: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Job 18:5-6 warns: "The light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle." Jesus proclaimed Himself "the light of the world" (John 8:12), promising that followers would never walk in darkness. Believers are light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8), shining in dark places (Philippians 2:15). The wicked, rejecting Christ the Light, remain in darkness leading to outer darkness eternally (Matthew 8:12).

Historical Context

In ancient times without electricity, light symbolized life, security, and prosperity. Lamps burning through the night indicated a living household. Extinguished lamps meant death, desolation, or judgment. God promised David his lamp wouldn't be extinguished (1 Kings 11:36, 15:4)—his dynasty would endure. Conversely, God threatened to extinguish wicked Jeroboam's family (1 Kings 14:10). The imagery powerfully communicated permanence versus extinction.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically for your 'light' to rejoice—to shine with increasing brightness in word and deed?
2. In what ways might your light be dimming due to sin, compromise, or neglect of spiritual disciplines?
3. How does abiding in Christ the Light (John 8:12) ensure your light never goes out?

Interlinear Text

אור	מִן	צדיק	חָיָה	רִשְׁעָה	וּמֹתָת	ידָעָה:
The light	of the righteous	rejoiceth	but the lamp	of the wicked	shall be put out	
H216	H6662	H8055	H5216	H7563	H1846	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 4:18 (Righteousness): But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Proverbs 24:20 (Evil): For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Psalms 112:4 (Righteousness): Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

Proverbs 20:20 (Parallel theme): Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Psalms 97:11 (Righteousness): Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Matthew 25:8 (Parallel theme): And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.