

Proverbs 14:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

Analysis

The fool's mouth contains 'a rod of pride'—his words become the instrument of his own punishment. Hebrew 'choter' (rod/twig) suggests both the tool of discipline and the symbol of pride (shooting upward presumptuously). In contrast, the 'lips of the wise' preserve them. This illustrates the principle of Proverbs 18:21: 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue.' Reformed theology recognizes that our words reveal our hearts (Matthew 12:34) and will be judged (Matthew 12:36-37). Pride-filled speech ultimately brings God's correction.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, the rod was both a symbol of authority and a tool of discipline. Foolish speech undermines one's own authority while inviting correction from God and others.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Do your words build up or tear down? Do they reveal pride or humility?

2. How might your speech patterns be creating unnecessary conflict or inviting discipline?
3. What practices help you cultivate wise, life-giving speech?

Interlinear Text

בְּפִי	אֶ וִיל	חֶ טֶר	גִּאֲוָה	וְשִׁפְתַי י	חֶ-כֶּמֶ ים
In the mouth	of the foolish	is a rod	of pride	but the lips	of the wise
H6310	H191	H2415	H1346	H8193	H2450

תִּשְׁמֹרָם:
shall preserve
H8104

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 12:6 (Parallel theme): The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.