

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 יְמִינֵי שְׁפָתִים אֲלֵי חַרְבָּה כִּי אֲלֵי לְבָבִים
In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride but the lips of the wise
H6310 H191 H2415 H1346 H8193 H2450

תָּשִׁמְרָה

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.

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