

Proverbs 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Analysis

Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly. Simchah le'chasar-lev ivvelet (שְׁמַחַת לְחַסָּר-לֵב אִילָת), folly is joy to one lacking heart). Those lacking discernment find pleasure in foolishness. Ve'ish tevunah yosher halokh (וְאֵישׁ תְּבוּנָה יָשָׁר הַלּוּךְ), but a man of understanding walks straight). The discerning walk uprightly (yashar, יָשָׁר, straight, right, upright). The proverb contrasts corrupted versus proper pleasure. The fool delights in evil; the wise delight in righteousness. True conversion transforms desires.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, fools found joy in idolatry, sexual immorality, injustice —practices abhorrent to God. The wise found joy in Torah, worship, and righteousness. Psalm 1 contrasts the blessed man who delights in God's law with the wicked. Romans 1:32 describes those who "have pleasure in them that do" evil. Conversion changes what we find joyful (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What brings you joy—foolish pleasures or righteous living?
2. How has the gospel transformed your desires, making what once seemed joyful now repulsive and vice versa?
3. What does it mean to find joy in walking uprightly rather than in folly?

Interlinear Text

אֵילָת	שְׁמַחַת	הַ	אֵלֶּה	לְמַסֵּר	לְבָ	אֵישׁ
Folly	is joy	to him that is destitute	of wisdom	but a man		
H200	H8057	H2638	H3820	H376		
תְּבֻנָּה	יִשְׁרָאֵל	לְכַתָּה				
of understanding	uprightly					
H8394	H3474	H1980				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:23 (Parallel theme): It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15 (Parallel theme): See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Proverbs 14:9 (Parallel theme): Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

Proverbs 14:16 (Parallel theme): A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Proverbs 11:12 (Parallel theme): He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

Psalms 111:10 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Job 28:28 (Parallel theme): And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

James 3:13 (Parallel theme): Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.