

Proverbs 17:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it:
whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

Analysis

A bribe is called a 'precious stone'—valuable and attractive to its possessor. 'Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth' describes the bribe's apparent effectiveness in accomplishing its giver's purposes. This is not endorsement but observation: bribes work in fallen systems. However, other proverbs condemn bribery (17:23, 15:27). Reformed theology recognizes corruption as a fruit of total depravity. This verse warns that in a sinful world, bribery appears successful, making it tempting. Yet God's law forbids it, and His justice will ultimately prevail over corruption.

Historical Context

Bribery perverted justice in ancient courts. Mosaic law explicitly forbade judges from taking bribes (Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19), recognizing that bribes 'blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous.'

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Have you been tempted to use money or influence to gain unfair advantage?
2. How do you maintain integrity in systems where corruption appears to 'prosper'?
3. What does trusting God's justice look like when bribery and corruption seem to succeed?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	אֶל	בְּעֵל	יְהוָה	בְּעֵינֵי	בְּשַׁפֵּד	כִּי	אָבִן	אָבִן
stone	is as a precious	A gift	in the eyes	of him that hath				
H68	H2580	H7810	H5869	H1167			H413	H3605
רַא	וְאֵשֶׁת	וְאֵשֶׁת	וְאֵשֶׁת	וְאֵשֶׁת	וְאֵשֶׁת	וְאֵשֶׁת		
H834	it whithersoever it turneth	H6437	it prospereth	H7919				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:8 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Isaiah 1:23 (Parallel theme): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Proverbs 21:14 (Parallel theme): A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

Proverbs 17:23 (Parallel theme): A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Amos 5:12 (Parallel theme): For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

1 Samuel 25:35 (Parallel theme): So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

Micah 7:3 (Parallel theme): That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

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