

Proverbs 18:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

Analysis

The fool's lips 'enter into contention' and his mouth 'calleth for strokes.' The Hebrew 'rib' (contention/strife) describes legal disputes and quarrels. The fool's speech creates conflict, and his mouth invites 'strokes' (Hebrew 'malkah'—blows/beatings). Foolish speech provokes violence against oneself. This illustrates the principle that our words have consequences. Reformed theology recognizes that the tongue is a fire kindled by hell (James 3:6). Uncontrolled speech destroys relationships, ruins reputations, and brings physical harm. Wisdom requires taming the tongue.

Historical Context

In ancient societies, verbal insults could lead to physical retaliation or formal legal proceedings. The fool's contentious speech literally endangered his life through the conflicts it created.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Does your speech create peace or provoke conflict?
2. Have you experienced consequences from unwise words that 'called for strokes'?
3. What practices help you exercise self-control before speaking contentiously?

Interlinear Text

לְמַהֲלֹם אוֹת וּפִי יִבֹּר יָבוֹ אֶל כְּסִיל שִׁפְתֵי י
lips **A fool's** **enter** **into contention** **and his mouth** **for strokes**
H8193 H3684 H935 H7379 H6310 H4112

יִקְרָא:
calleth
H7121

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 27:3 (Parallel theme): A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.