

# Proverbs 20:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

## Analysis

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Ill-gotten gain may seem 'sweet' initially—providing immediate pleasure and satisfaction. But eventually 'his mouth shall be filled with gravel'—the outcome is bitter, painful, and destructive. Bread obtained through deceit, theft, or fraud brings momentary gratification but ultimate ruin. The metaphor of 'gravel' suggests both worthlessness and injury; what seemed nourishing becomes indigestible and harmful. This reflects God's moral order: sin always pays wages, and stolen pleasure turns to lasting pain. The apparently successful wicked will face both temporal consequences and eternal judgment. Better to earn honest bread, even if scarce, than feast on dishonest abundance that becomes ashes.

## Historical Context

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Biblical law prescribed restitution for theft and fraud (Leviticus 6:1-7). Beyond legal penalties, the proverb warns of the internal corruption and ultimate divine judgment that follow dishonest gain.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. Are you tempted to take shortcuts or compromises for quick gain?
2. What 'sweet bread' might actually be poisoning your soul?

## Interlinear Text

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בָּרָע בְּ אִישׁ לְ בָּרָע בְּ אִישׁ שְׁקָר ! אַמְּרָא מִלְּאָה יְהוָה

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with gravel

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## Additional Cross-References

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**Ecclesiastes 11:9** (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

**Hebrews 11:25** (Parallel theme): Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

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