

Proverbs 20:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Analysis

This proverb uses lamp imagery for human consciousness: 'The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.' The 'spirit of man' (neshamah adam—breath, life-force given by God) functions as God's 'candle' or 'lamp' (ner), illuminating the inner person. This suggests human conscience, self-awareness, and moral consciousness as God-given capacities enabling moral reflection and self-examination. The lamp 'searches all the inward parts'—reaches the deepest places of human motivation and thought. This anticipates the New Testament teaching that the spirit of man knows his own thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:11) and that God's word discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Historical Context

Hebrew anthropology distinguished physical life (nephesh) from God-breathed spirit (ruach/neshamah). This verse celebrates the unique human capacity for self-reflection and moral awareness as God's gift distinguishing humans from animals. This consciousness enables recognition of sin, moral deliberation, and accountability before God. It is the basis for conscience and moral responsibility.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you utilize the 'lamp' of conscience and self-examination God has given you?
2. What 'inward parts' might God be searching in you through conscience, conviction, or His word that require attention?

Interlinear Text

נֵר	! הָיָה	נְשָׁמָת	אָדָם	חֹפֵּשׁ	כָּל
is the candle	of the LORD	The spirit	of man	searching	H3605
H5216	H3068	H5397	H120	H2664	
חֲדָרָי	בֶּטֶן:				
all the inward parts	of the belly				
H2315	H990				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:11 (Spirit): For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Job 32:8 (Spirit): But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

Genesis 2:7 (References Lord): And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Romans 2:15 (Parallel theme): Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Proverbs 20:30 (Parallel theme): The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

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