

Proverbs 21:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

Analysis

Wealth gained 'by a lying tongue' is 'a vanity tossed to and fro' and pursued by 'them that seek death.' The Hebrew 'hebel' (vanity) means vapor or breath—insubstantial and fleeting. Ill-gotten gains provide no real security. The phrase 'tossed to and fro' (Hebrew 'niddaph'—driven, scattered) suggests instability. Seeking wealth through lies ultimately seeks death—both physical and spiritual. Reformed theology recognizes that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Dishonest wealth cannot satisfy and leads to destruction.

Historical Context

Ancient merchants could easily deceive in transactions using false weights, misrepresenting goods, or breaking agreements. Such dishonesty might bring short-term wealth but led to loss of reputation, legal consequences, and God's curse.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Have you been tempted to gain financially through deception or dishonesty?
2. How does understanding wealth's vanity when gained wrongly affect your economic ethics?
3. What does it mean practically to prioritize righteousness over financial gain?

Interlinear Text

פֶּעַל	אֶצְרוֹת	בִּלְשׁוֹן	שֶׁקֶר	הַבָּל	נִדָּף
The getting	of treasures	tongue	by a lying	is a vanity	tossed to and fro of
H6467	H214	H3956	H8267	H1892	H5086
מִבְקָשֵׁי	מָוֶת:				
them that seek	death				
H1245	H4194				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:2 (Parallel theme): Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

Proverbs 13:11 (Parallel theme): Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

Proverbs 20:21 (Parallel theme): An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Proverbs 8:36 (Parallel theme): But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Jeremiah 17:11 (Parallel theme): As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.