

Proverbs 23:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Analysis

This verse continues the previous thought, intensifying the parental joy theme. 'My reins shall rejoice' (וְתֵלֵזְנִי כִלְיוֹתַי/veta'aloznah khilyotay, literally 'my kidneys will exult') uses Hebrew idiom where 'kidneys/reins' represent innermost being—emotions, conscience, deepest self. The Septuagint translates this as 'my lips' (anticipating the verse's second half), but the Hebrew emphasizes visceral, profound joy. 'When thy lips speak right things' (בְּדַבֵּר שְׁפָתֶיךָ מִשְׁרִים/bedabber sefateykha mesharim, when your lips speak uprightness/integrity) identifies the cause: children whose speech reflects wisdom and righteousness. Speech reveals character (Luke 6:45). Right speech indicates a transformed heart. Parents rejoice not merely in children's external success but in their godly character. This echoes 3 John 1:4: 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.'

Historical Context

Hebrew anthropology located different aspects of personhood in body parts: heart (thoughts/will), kidneys (emotions/conscience), bowels (compassion). Modern readers might find this odd, but it reflects ancient understanding of integrated personhood. Proverbs uses this language throughout (Proverbs 7:23; 23:16; 26:22). The emphasis on children's speech reflects oral culture's values—words revealed wisdom or folly, righteousness or wickedness. In ancient Israel, speech determined social standing, legal outcomes, and covenant faithfulness. The New Testament continues emphasizing speech's importance. Jesus taught: 'by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). James devoted extensive attention to the tongue (James 3:1-12). Early

church instruction emphasized transformed speech as evidence of salvation (Colossians 3:8-10; Ephesians 4:29).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does your speech reveal about your heart's true condition?
2. How can you cultivate 'right speech' that brings joy to God and others?
3. Are there patterns of speech—cynicism, gossip, profanity, dishonesty—that need transformation?

Interlinear Text

וְתִשְׂמְחוּ	כָּלִיּוֹתַי	בְּדִבְרֵי	שִׁפְתֵי יְהוָה	מִיִּשְׁרָיִם:
shall rejoice	Yea my reins	speak	when thy lips	right things
H5937	H3629	H1696	H8193	H4339

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 8:6 (Parallel theme): Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

Ephesians 5:4 (Parallel theme): Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Colossians 4:4 (Parallel theme): That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 4:29 (Parallel theme): Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

James 3:2 (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

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