

Proverbs 23:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

Analysis

Put 'a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.' This vivid imagery counsels radical self-control with food, especially in the ruler's presence. The Hebrew 'baal nephesh' (given to appetite/master of desire) describes gluttony. The knife metaphor suggests treating unchecked appetite as mortally dangerous. Reformed theology recognizes gluttony as sin—failure of self-control and idolatry of physical pleasure. This applies beyond food to all appetites. We must mortify the flesh (Colossians 3:5), treating uncontrolled desire as life-threatening.

Historical Context

Royal feasts displayed abundance and luxury. The temptation to overindulge was real, but doing so revealed lack of self-control and could result in loss of favor or manipulation by the host.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What appetites do you need to treat as seriously dangerous and requiring radical control?
2. How does the call to mortify the flesh apply to your eating habits and physical desires?
3. In what ways might uncontrolled appetite compromise your integrity or judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׂמַתְךָ	שֶׁכֶּן יָן	בְּלֶעַךְ גְּ	אָם	בְּ עַל	נָ פֶשֶׁת	אֶתֶּה:
And put	a knife	to thy throat	H518	if thou be a man given	to appetite	H859
H7760	H7915	H3930		H1167	H5315	

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

1 Corinthians 9:27 (Parallel theme): But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.