

# Proverbs 23:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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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

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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

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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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

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וְעַל־בָּطֶן־יְמִינְךָ וְעַל־בָּטֶן־אַמְתָּךָ אִם־בְּעַל־בָּטֶן־אַפְתָּהָךְ  
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

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**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.