

# Proverbs 26:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

## Analysis

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Fervent lips with an evil heart are like silver dross covering an earthen vessel. The Hebrew 'dalaq' (burning/fervent) and 'keseph siyggim' (silver dross) creates imagery of fraudulent covering. Silver-covered pottery appears valuable but isn't. Smooth speech covering evil heart is similarly fraudulent - appearing genuine while being worthless. This warns against trusting eloquence without evaluating character. Proverbs 26:24-25 expand this: 'He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.'

## Historical Context

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Ancient pottery could be coated with metallic glaze to appear valuable. Without assaying, fraud wasn't apparent. Similarly, smooth speakers could deceive without discernment. Jesus warned of false prophets who 'come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves' (Matthew 7:15). Paul described false teachers who 'by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple' (Romans 16:18). Eloquence doesn't guarantee truth; evaluate content and character, not merely presentation.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. What smooth speakers are you trusting without evaluating their character or message's truth?
2. How might your own speech be 'silver dross' - eloquent covering for evil heart?
3. What discernment would see through fervent lips to detect wicked hearts?

## Interlinear Text

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דָּלֶק	יְמִם	שְׁפָת	אַם	לְלַב
with silver	dross	covered	are like a potsherd	lips
H3701	H5509	H6823	H2789	H8193
				H1814

לְלַב  
heart

וְעֵבֶד  
and a wicked

H3820 H7451

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 11:39** (Evil): And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

**Proverbs 10:18** (Parallel theme): He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

**Proverbs 25:4** (Parallel theme): Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

**Matthew 23:27** (Parallel theme): Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

**Ezekiel 33:31** (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

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