

Proverbs 28:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Analysis

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour (מַקְרֵב אֶתְמָלֵךְ חֵן, mokhiach adam acharai chen yimtsa)—מַקְרֵב (mokhiach, 'one who rebukes, reproves, corrects') brings אֶתְמָלֵךְ (acharai, 'afterward, later') the discovery (מֵצָא, matsa) of חֵן (chen, 'favor, grace'). Initially painful, faithful correction produces later gratitude. Proverbs 27:6: 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.'

Than he that flattereth with the tongue (מִמְכְּלֵיךְ לְשׁוֹן, mimachaliq lashon)—(chalaq, 'to be smooth, slippery, flattering') with the tongue (lashon, 'tongue') produces immediate pleasure but eventual harm. Flattery deceives, rebounds, and destroys relationships. Paul refused such tactics: 'For neither at any time used we flattering words' (1 Thessalonians 2:5). True love speaks truth (Ephesians 4:15).

Historical Context

Ancient royal courts were notorious for flattering courtiers who told kings what they wanted to hear. True prophets brought rebuke (Nathan to David, 2 Samuel 12; Micaiah to Ahab, 1 Kings 22) and faced hostility—but history vindicated them. Proverbs advocates the prophetic courage to speak uncomfortable truth.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Who in your life loves you enough to rebuke you—and are you receiving their correction with gratitude?
2. Where might you be flattering rather than speaking truth, seeking immediate approval over long-term benefit?
3. How can you cultivate both the courage to rebuke when necessary and the humility to receive rebuke?

Interlinear Text

מִתְּחִזֵּק אֶת־עַמּוֹן	מִזְכָּר יְהוָה	אֶת־עַמּוֹן	אֶת־עַמּוֹן	מִזְכָּר יְהוָה
He that rebuketh	a man	afterwards	more favour	shall find
H3198	H120	H310	H2580	H4672

לְשׂוֹן: מְפַתֵּל יְהִי
with the tongue
than he that flattereth H2505

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 141:5 (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Matthew 18:15 (Parallel theme): Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.