

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 (מוֹכִיחַ אָדָם אַחֲרָי חֵן, mokhiach adam acharai chen yimtsa)—מוֹכִיחַ (mokhiach, 'one who rebukes, reproves, corrects') brings אַחֲרָי (acharai, 'afterward, later') the discovery (מָצָא, 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 (מִמְחָלִיק לָשׁוֹן, mimachaliq lashon)—חָלָאק (chalaq, 'to be smooth, slippery, flattering') with the לָשׁוֹן (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

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|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| מִי־כִי־יִבֹּקֵךְ | אִישׁ־אֶחָד | אַחֲרָיִם | וְעוֹדֵי־רַחֲמִים | יִמְצָא |
| He that rebuketh | a man | afterwards | more favour | shall find |
| H3198 | H120 | H310 | H2580 | H4672 |
| קִמְמֹחַל־יִקְ | לְשׁוֹן־: | | | |
| than he that flattereth | with the tongue | | | |
| H2505 | H3956 | | | |

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.