

Proverbs 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

Analysis

The wicked cannot sleep until they do evil; their rest is taken away unless they cause someone to fall. This disturbing verse reveals sin's enslaving power - wickedness becomes compulsive. The Hebrew 'shena' (sleep) and 'tenuwa' (sleep/slumber) indicate rest that eludes the wicked until they satisfy evil desires. Sin progresses from temptation to action to addiction to compulsion. What begins as choice becomes slavery.

Historical Context

Scripture consistently portrays sin's progressive enslaving nature. Romans 6:16 teaches: 'to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are.' What starts as freedom from God's law ends as bondage to sin. Isaiah 5:18 describes those 'drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope' - sin binds increasingly tightly.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What sins have progressed from occasional temptation to compulsive patterns in your life?
2. How does recognizing sin's enslaving power motivate you to address it early?
3. What hope does Christ offer for those enslaved by habitual wickedness?

Interlinear Text

ל א כ י	ל א	יִשְׁנוּ	אִם	ל א	יִרְעוּ
H3588	H3808	For they sleep	H518	H3808	not except they have done mischief
		H3462			H7489
וּנְגַזְלָהּ	וְנִתְּנוּ	אִם	ל א	יִכְשׁוּלוּ:	
is taken away	and their sleep	H518	H3808	unless they cause some to fall	
H1497	H8142			H3782	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 36:4 (Parallel theme): He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

Micah 2:1 (Parallel theme): Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Isaiah 57:20 (Parallel theme): But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

Proverbs 1:16 (Parallel theme): For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

2 Peter 2:14 (Parallel theme): Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: