

Proverbs 5:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Analysis

The fool dies for lack of instruction, led astray by his great folly. The Hebrew 'muwth' (die) and 'shagah' (go astray/err) describe fatal wandering. Refusing instruction doesn't lead to freedom but death. The 'greatness' of folly isn't admirable magnitude but destructive enormity. This verse summarizes chapter 5's warning: sexual immorality, rooted in rejecting wisdom, leads to death - social, spiritual, potentially physical.

Historical Context

Mosaic Law prescribed death for adultery (Leviticus 20:10), though enforcement varied. Beyond legal execution, adultery produced social death (disgrace, exclusion), relational death (broken families), and spiritual death (covenant violation). Proverbs emphasizes all these dimensions - folly's consequences are comprehensively deadly.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What 'death' (social, relational, spiritual) results from folly you've observed or experienced?
2. How does recognizing sin's deadly consequences motivate receptivity to instruction?
3. What specific instruction, if heeded, would prevent death (in some form) in your life?

Interlinear Text

ה וא	יָ מוֹת	בְּאֵין	מוֹסֵר	וּבְרֹב	אֱלֹתָיו
H1931	He shall die	H369	without instruction	and in the greatness	of his folly
	H4191		H4148	H7230	H200

יִשָּׁגָה:

he shall go astray

H7686

Additional Cross-References

Job 36:12 (Parallel theme): But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.

Job 4:21 (Parallel theme): Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Proverbs 14:32 (Parallel theme): The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Proverbs 10:21 (Parallel theme): The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

Psalms 81:12 (Parallel theme): So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

Proverbs 14:14 (Parallel theme): The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

