

Proverbs 9:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

Analysis

This verse gives voice to Folly, the rival of Wisdom personified in this chapter. 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant' expresses the seductive lie that forbidden things are more enjoyable. The allure of the forbidden, the thrill of secrecy, the excitement of transgression—Folly appeals to these sinful inclinations. But verse 18 reveals the truth: 'he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.' The pleasure is temporary; the consequences are eternal. This exposes sin's fundamental deception—promising satisfaction while delivering death.

Historical Context

Chapter 9 concludes the instructional section with a final dramatic contrast between Wisdom's feast (vv.1-6) and Folly's house (vv.13-18). Both invite the simple; both offer food. But Wisdom offers life while Folly leads to death. This mirrors the Two Ways tradition found in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 and throughout Jewish and early Christian teaching.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What 'stolen waters' or 'secret bread' are you tempted to believe will bring satisfaction despite God's prohibition?
2. How can you cultivate long-term perspective to resist the immediate allure of forbidden pleasures?

Interlinear Text

מֵיִם	גְּנוּבֵי יָם	יִמְתֶּ קָו	וְלֶ חֶם	סֵתֶר יָם	יִנְעָם:
waters	Stolen	are sweet	and bread	eaten in secret	is pleasant
H4325	H1589	H4985	H3899	H5643	H5276

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:17 (Parallel theme): Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Proverbs 30:20 (Parallel theme): Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Ephesians 5:12 (Parallel theme): For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

Romans 7:8 (Parallel theme): But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

Genesis 3:6 (Parallel theme): And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.