

# *Bread and Gravel*

*Prov 20:17*

1

17 Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

2

This idea of "bread of deceit" is a somewhat ambiguous phrase, it might mean either of two things, and probably means both.

3

1) It may either mean any good obtained by deceit  
Meaning to profit from deceit

2) Or good which deceives in its possession  
This is talking about something that on the surface seems good, but winds up bringing heartache or problems.

In the first thought, it would appear to have reference primarily to unjustly gotten gain, but the latter has a wider meaning and applies to all the worthless treasures and lying delights of life. The metaphor is something that was common at that day and time. Grain was ground into flour by placing it between two stones and rubbing them together. It's obvious that the process would lend itself to small pieces of the rock getting mixed in with the flour. As diligent as they would try to be to sift the flour to get the gravel out, some always managed to get through and would contaminate the bread. This presented a problem when eating the bread. Savemart used to sell a sandwich that had an olive spread on it, the spread was a chopped olive mixture marinated with a garlic oil marinate. I love it, the problem is that on occasion they don't get all the pits out, I cracked a tooth when I caught one of those pieces of olive pit. That is the point Solomon is making, that when deception is used, the gain from, or the satisfaction of the possession itself, is like bread that has hidden gravel, or olive mix with hidden pits. Either way, the enjoyment of fresh warm bread, or a sandwich made with the olive mix, or even better a sandwich made from fresh warm bread with the olive mix, is made bitter by the danger of broken teeth from the hidden obstacles.

Solomon is trying to illustrate that profit gained through sin is tainted, and that there will be consequences eventually. The first lesson then is that...

4

1) All actions have a life, even the ones we think to be the most insignificant.

The temptation for us is that we tend to think that a deed when done, is done. We grasp at a momentary pleasure, and ignore the hidden consequences. But of all the things with which we delude ourselves, none are more fatal than that deceit which ignores the fact that there are consequences that have to be taken into account. I read once that if we were able to create a cooling rain storm to ease the high temperatures and drought the valley is prone to experience, that the resulting consequences throughout the world would be catastrophic, because there is a link between the smallest weather event in one place and the category 5 hurricane half way around the world. We

may view something as inconsequential, but the effects it has on others or even ourselves might be catastrophic and have far ranging effects. The bread may seem like such a minor thing right up to when we bite down on the rock, cracking a molar that sends an arrow of pain right into our skull. We might think of something as small, maybe an unintended wayward word or action, or an insignificant deed either omitted or committed, whatever the consequences, big or small, our actions may have in the world, they all have a very real influence on us, their perpetrators; each of these small seemingly insignificant acts tend to modify our character, to form habits, to drag after itself a whole trail of consequences, including building up or tainting our reputation and how others see us. Each strikes at us inwardly and reveals itself in our works outwardly. The whole of someone's life may be set forth in the illustration that Christ uses...

**5** “A sower went forth to sow,”

And

**6** “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

A few years back, one of my accounts got hooked on raising sago palms. Sagos are one of those plants that while they do produce seeds and grow from them, they also produce shoots off the main trunk that will also root and grow. I had some of these shoots that I had forgotten about and they sat in my garage for 2+ years, and had dried out. I mentioned to Dennis that I had found these dried tiny shoots and he told me to put them into the ground and start watering them. Sure enough the following year I had plants growing. This same thing is seen in the high country with certain types of pines and cedars. Their seed falls to the ground and lies dormant until there is a fire which causes the shell of the seed to open and the seed to germinate.

The seed of our actions may lie dormant like the sago shoots, but eventually they bear fruit, good or bad. Then, we as the sower become the reaper. The point is that the things we do will eventually be brought into the open, whether now or when Christ comes again. The seeds we sow by our actions, our words, our obedience or disobedience will bring forth fruit.

Paul writes in...

**2 Cor 5:10**

**7**

**10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

We will be known by Christ for the things that we do in this life.

**Rom 2:14-16**

**8**

**14** For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, **15** in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, **16** on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

We will be known by the deeds of our lives. They may lie dormant and hidden from this world, but they will be made known.

The second lesson is that

**9** 2) The deception of what may seem sweet

This brings us to what Solomon is saying. The lure of deception is that it seems to produce gain, which is what we have been looking at; and the gain that is seen when we practice deceit, too often overshadows the consequence that will most assuredly come. The bread gained by deceit seems sweet to a man. There often appears to be a certain pleasure in a lie, and the taste of the bread purchased by that lie still seems just as refreshingly sweet, right up to the rock that breaks the tooth.

The Hebrew writer calls our attention to Moses...

*Heb 11:24-25*

**10**

**24** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; **25** choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;

The writer here points out that any life that is not with God is defined as sinful. If our focus is on the things of this world then there are pleasures to be found in sin. Moses had in his grasp power, riches, all the things that being a son of Pharaoh's daughter would bring. That is Satan's lure. The sinful indulgences of this world are pleasurable; they feel good, Paul warns us about the desire of the body to indulge in them. They are the sweet bread of wickedness...

*Prov 4:14-17*

**11**

**14** Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not proceed in the way of evil men. **15** Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on. **16** For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. **17** For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.

Therein lays the deceit, the falsehood Solomon talks about. The allurements of this world that Satan uses to draw man away from God, while at first seem so thrilling, so exciting, bring with them the hidden dangers of sin. The wicked think themselves above the consequence of sin, they think their deeds will remain hidden for eternity, or they choose to not believe in God, His truth, and His vengeance.

*Prov 24:9*

**12**

**9** The devising of folly is sin, And the scoffer is an abomination to men.

They have deceived themselves, and that is the real impact of the falsehood Solomon describes. We can deceive ourselves into thinking anything we want. The older we get, the more sophisticated our self-deception. When I was five, I had convinced myself that I was Roy Rogers, the older I got, the more devious my delusions became. Solomon is trying to get his son to

understand that the bread of that delusion is not sweet, like it seems, but bitter and full of dangers. John says it this way...

**1 John 1:8** 13

**8** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Who are we deceiving when we think ourselves stronger than Satan, able to overcome the world without Christ, God, the Word in our lives? Where do we think that that deception will take us? We might be able to hide from the world who we really are, but do we really believe that we can hide from God?

There is only one choice that will bring us the reward...

**Prov 28:13** 14

**13** He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

We can be successful in fulfilling the desires we hunger for, the gratification of that fulfillment brings with it pleasure. I once had a drug addict tell me that he didn't care where he was at, he could always find a source for his drugs. And here is an important point, if a man is hungry, that hunger doesn't care how he has got the bread he devours. His hunger is satiated whether he stole the bread or not. This dynamic is true with all of our desires, whether the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. The sweetness of the fulfillment of the desire, rests in the satiation of that desire but is lost in the reality of sin. Such sweetness of fulfillment is in its very essence, momentary. Solomon tells us that even while being enjoyed, that bread of deceit turns into gravel, and it breaks the teeth, taints the heart, and condemns the soul. We have all experienced the reality of this metaphor, it is familiar to us all. How often have we tantalized ourselves with the thought, "If I could just get this or that, things would be better?" Yet, more often than not, the truth is that once realized, the expected happiness quickly dies, and a greater desire takes its place. The duration of the things of this world are at best fleeting.

This leads us to our final point, and that is concerning...

15 3) The abiding sweetness of true bread.

This idea of bread that is not full of deceit but fills the soul is at the very heart of our discussion.

**John 6:30-31** 16

**30** They said therefore to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? **31** "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

The Jews sought a sign from Christ that He was who He said He was, like the sign that God gave their forefathers in the wilderness of the manna, bread, from heaven. They understood that the manna had sustained them in their wanderings for forty years.

Christ responds to their seeking by telling them they need to understand that it was God who sent the “bread of life”, the manna, so that the people could live and that that same God is still taking care of His people by sending...

**John 6:32-33**

**17**

**32** Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

**33** "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

Jesus tells them that God has done his part, has fulfilled his promise to redeem the world from the deception of sin. Satan had deceived Eve when he told her that eating the fruit would not surely kill her. Deception and the acceptance of that deception brought sin into the world by man. God sent the “bread of life” to bring salvation into the world.

Their reaction should be our reaction to this greatest of offerings...

**John 6:34**

**18**

**34** They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

Isn't that what we all want, to live?

Here then is the truth as opposed to the deception, to the lie...

**John 6:35**

**19**

**35** Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Life is in Christ. The pleasures of a life fulfilled in Eternity are found in no other name, the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Would you rather live a life of deception, or truth?