

## Fleet of Foot

Proverbs 6:16-19\*

“The LORD hates . . . feet that are swift in running to evil” (6:16,18).

The proverbs of Solomon emphasize that God hates feet that run recklessly into the trap of trouble and misery. By contrast, God values self-control and caution. In all relationships and areas of life, He values feet that sense danger and stay clear of trouble. He warns of feet that walk in the path of wickedness and edge curiously and dangerously close to temptation.

The Lord made feet to enable us to walk throughout all the earth in His service, not to carry us into trouble and misery. He made feet to enable us to run from temptation, not to chase after evil.

Solomon’s collection of word pictures and wise sayings are meant to make young people street-wise and head-smart in dealing with the dangers of home, wealth, debt, business, alcohol, and sexual desire.

To please God, we must know what He values. What does He care about? What does He love? What does He hate?

### God’s values in the negative form (16-19)

- #1. God hates haughty eyes (17a)
- #2. God hates a lying tongue (17b)
- #3. God hates hands that shed innocent blood (17c)
- #4. God hates a heart that devises wicked plans (18a)
- #5. God hates feet that run rapidly to evil (18b)

### God’s values in the positive form (select vv.)

## What about “Feet” in spiritual contexts

The foot can indicate something that is opposite something else. The foot of the bed is at the opposite end of its head. A serviceman’s footlocker is at the foot of the bed. The foot of the statue points to its base, while the foot of the mountain stands at the opposite end of its peak.

The words “foot” or “feet” occur in many idioms that express human relationships or situations. When a man is said to have “feet of clay,” he is said to be fallible. To be on a “firm footing” is to enjoy a stable position as in business or a personal relationship. If one “gets off on the wrong foot,” he is in an unfavorable position. Someone who is “footloose,” however, is unattached. If someone “puts his foot in his mouth,” he blunders by making an embarrassing or troublesome remark. “Putting one’s best foot forward” signifies doing one’s best. To “put one’s feet to something” is to act on the basis of prior information or convictions. “Getting a foothold” on a problem secures a firm basis for solving it. If someone “puts his foot down,” he makes a firm decision. To “follow in someone’s footsteps” is to emulate another’s example or occupy his or her former position. To “leave one’s footprints” is to provide an example or an impression.

The image of feet is often found in biblical passages dealing with man’s relationship to God and society. Preserving sound spiritual judgment and discernment will give a sense of security to the believer, for his foot will not stumble (Prov. 3:23). Nor will his feet become ensnared, for God will be his guide and protector (v. 26). Spiritual integrity and security for God’s people come by their humbly giving glory to God so that their feet do not stumble (Jer. 13:15–16). In similar sentiment the psalmist exclaimed, “For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life” (Ps. 56:13).

The wise person’s pursuit of spiritual maturity and moral purity is enhanced by making level paths for his feet and not deviating from them (Prov. 4:26–27; cf. Ps. 26:12). The faithful believer’s feet will not stray from God’s path (44:18). Such a course of action may help others avoid spiritual or moral failure (Heb. 12:13). Moreover, believers should control their anger in order not to “give the devil a foothold” (Eph. 4:27). And believers are to direct their footsteps in accord with God’s Word (Ps. 119:133). “Obedience to God guarantees that one’s feet will not slip (Ps 17:5), for God is said to guard the feet of his saints (1 Sam 2:9). This is related to the desire for feet to be on level ground (Ps 26:12; Prov 4:26; Heb 12:13) in a spacious place (Ps 31:8) on firm ground (Ps 40:2) and guided by the lamp of God’s Word (Ps 119:105).”<sup>37,2</sup>

\*These notes are prayerfully prepared to aid, not replace, your personal study of God’s word.

<sup>37</sup> Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 280.

<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Patterson, “The Biblical Imagery of Feet as a Vehicle for Truth,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 37–38.