

Proverbs 17:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Analysis

An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him. The wicked actively pursue (meri, מַרֵּי, rebellion, revolt) against God and authority. They don't stumble into sin but seek it. Therefore God sends a cruel messenger (mal'akh akhzari, מֶלֶךְ אֲכִזָּרִי—whether human agents or divine judgment—against them. The proverb warns that persistent rebellion invokes severe judgment. Absalom's rebellion brought cruel judgment (2 Samuel 18:9-15). God resists the proud who rebel but gives grace to the humble who submit (James 4:6-7).

Historical Context

Israel's history demonstrated this principle—rebels against God faced cruel messengers of judgment. Korah's rebellion brought earth swallowing them (Numbers 16:31-33). Absalom's revolt ended in death (2 Samuel 18). Sheba's rebellion was crushed (2 Samuel 20). Rome became God's cruel messenger against Jerusalem's rebellion (Luke 19:41-44). The pattern remains—persistent rebellion invites severe judgment.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what areas might you be seeking rebellion against God or legitimate authority?
2. How should the warning of cruel messengers motivate submission and repentance?
3. What does it mean to humble yourself under God's mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6) rather than seeking rebellion?

Interlinear Text

אֵלֶּנֶּה מִנְּגָדָה יְבָקַשׁ בְּעֵבֶד וּמְלָאָה אֵלֶּה כִּי תְּכַרְבֵּן אֵלֶּה
H389 **only rebellion** H4805 **man seeketh** H1245 **An evil** H7451 **messenger** H4397 **therefore a cruel** H394

בְּלֹא יִשְׁלַח
shall be sent H0
H7971

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 18:15 (Parallel theme): And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

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