

Proverbs 21:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

Analysis

The wicked serves as 'ransom for the righteous'—taking the judgment the righteous might have suffered. This principle appears throughout Scripture: Haman hanged on the gallows prepared for Mordecai; Babylon judged while Israel delivered. God providentially arranges circumstances so the wicked receive the consequences intended for the righteous, delivering His people through the enemy's destruction. The ultimate fulfillment is Christ, the Righteous One, serving as ransom for sinners (though this verse speaks of wicked ransoming righteous, the archetype reversal points to Christ). God's justice ensures the wicked don't prosper indefinitely; their plots against the righteous rebound upon themselves. This comforts persecuted believers: God will vindicate and deliver.

Historical Context

Israel's history shows repeated instances of enemies destroyed while Israel delivered—Egypt's army, Assyrian siege lifted, Haman's plot reversed. God judges those who touch His anointed.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Do you trust God to deliver you from those who plot evil against you?
2. How does this principle ultimately point to Christ as the righteous ransom for the wicked?

Interlinear Text

כֹּפֶר	לְצַדִּיק	רָשָׁע	וְתַחַת	יֵשָׁרִים
shall be a ransom	for the righteous	The wicked	H8478	for the upright
H3724	H6662	H7563		H3477
וְהַגֹּדֵל:				
and the transgressor				
H898				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:8 (Righteousness): The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

1 Peter 3:18 (Righteousness): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: