

Proverbs 21:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Analysis

Justice and judgment (ethical living) please God more than sacrifice (ritual observance). This prophetic theme (1 Samuel 15:22, Micah 6:6-8) shows God values obedience over religious performance. Reformed theology emphasizes that true worship flows from transformed hearts, not mere external conformity.

Historical Context

Israel's tendency toward ritualism without righteousness drew consistent prophetic rebuke. The sacrificial system was meant to lead to holiness, not substitute for it.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you prioritize ethical living over mere religious activities?

2. What sacrifices or spiritual practices might substitute for genuine obedience in your life?

Interlinear Text

עַשֵׂה	צִדִּיקָהּ	וּמִשְׁפָּט	נִבְחָר	לִיהוָה	מִזְבֵּחַ:
To do	justice	and judgment	is more acceptable	to the LORD	than sacrifice
H6213	H6666	H4941	H977	H3068	H2077

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 15:22 (Sacrifice): And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Hosea 6:6 (Sacrifice): For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Proverbs 15:8 (Sacrifice): The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Mark 12:33 (Sacrifice): And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Psalms 50:8 (Sacrifice): I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.