

Proverbs 22:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

Analysis

This command—'Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set'—prohibits moving boundary markers. 'Ancient landmark' (גָּזָבָל עוֹלָם/gevul olam) refers to stones marking property boundaries. Moving them to steal land was a serious crime. The law explicitly forbade this: 'Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance' (Deuteronomy 19:14). Landmark removal violated the land distribution God ordained when Israel entered Canaan (Joshua 13-21). Each tribe and family received an inheritance—moving landmarks stole God-given portions. Beyond literal boundaries, this principle protects established order, tradition, and authority structures. In theological terms, it warns against abandoning orthodox doctrine ('the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,' Jude 3) or rejecting biblical moral standards. 'Removing landmarks' can mean casting off constraints to seize what doesn't belong to us—whether property, power, or theological innovation. Wisdom honors what previous generations established while maintaining biblical fidelity.

Historical Context

Land ownership in Israel wasn't merely economic but theological—God owned the land and granted it to His people (Leviticus 25:23). Each family's inheritance connected them to the covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Landmark removal therefore violated both civil and covenant law. Wealthy landowners often accumulated property by defrauding the poor (Isaiah 5:8; Micah 2:2). The prophets condemned this as covenant violation. The concept extends to spiritual

'landmarks.' Israel was commanded not to move the boundaries of acceptable worship (Deuteronomy 12:32). Yet they repeatedly did so, adopting pagan practices. In the early church, false teachers moved doctrinal landmarks (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2:1). Church history records constant battles over doctrinal boundaries—the creeds functioned as theological landmarks defining orthodoxy. Reformed Christianity particularly emphasizes maintaining the 'old paths' (Jeremiah 6:16) of biblical truth against innovation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What 'ancient landmarks'—biblical doctrines, moral standards, worship practices—are you tempted to move or disregard?
2. How do you balance honoring tradition versus reforming error in light of Scripture?
3. In what ways does contemporary culture pressure you to abandon biblical 'landmarks' for modern sensibilities?

Interlinear Text

אֶל תִּפְרֹשׂ גַּם וְעַל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂת אָבֹתֶיךָ: הַזְּמָנָה אֲשֶׁר הָזָרְתָּ לְעַמְּךָ כִּי אַתָּה תְּבִרְכָּה
H408 Remove H5253 H1366 H5769 H834 H6213 H1

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 19:14 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

Deuteronomy 27:17 (Parallel theme): Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Proverbs 23:10 (Parallel theme): Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

Job 24:2 (Parallel theme): Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.

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