

Proverbs 23:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

Analysis

This command echoes 22:28 but adds a specific victim: the fatherless. 'Remove not the old landmark' (אל־תַּסֵּג גְבוּל עוֹלָם/al-taseg gevul olam) prohibits moving ancient boundary stones. 'Enter not into the fields of the fatherless' (וְבִשְׂדֵי יְתוֹמִים אַל־תֵּבֵא/uvisedey yetomim al-tavo) warns against seizing orphans' property. The fatherless were particularly vulnerable—without paternal protection or advocacy, they faced exploitation. God repeatedly commands special care for orphans, widows, and foreigners (Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 24:17; 27:19). Oppressing orphans violates covenant faithfulness and provokes divine wrath. James defines 'pure religion' as visiting 'the fatherless and widows in their affliction' (James 1:27). The gospel reveals believers as adopted sons through Christ (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). We were spiritual orphans, alienated from God, but He made us heirs (Romans 8:17). This should create compassion for the fatherless and commitment to defending the defenseless.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern societies were patriarchal—fathers provided protection, provision, and legal representation. Fatherless children faced severe disadvantage. Without inheritance rights enforcement, unscrupulous relatives or neighbors could seize their land. The law provided protections: 'Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise... My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless' (Exodus 22:22-24). Despite this, oppression occurred. Job defended

himself by noting his care for orphans (Job 31:17, 21). Prophets condemned those who 'judge not the cause of the fatherless' (Isaiah 1:23; Jeremiah 5:28). In the early church, care for widows and orphans was organized (Acts 6:1-6). The epistle of James addresses class distinctions and commands practical care for the vulnerable (James 2:15-16).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does your church demonstrate practical care for modern 'orphans'— foster children, single-parent families, refugees?
2. What does your adoption as God's child teach you about defending the fatherless?
3. In what ways might you be complicit in systems that disadvantage the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

אֶל	תִּסַּג	גִּבּוֹל	עוֹלָם	וּבְשֵׂד	תוֹמֵי	אֶל
H408	Remove	landmark	not the old	not into the fields	of the fatherless	H408
	H5253	H1366	H5769	H7704	H3490	

וְכָאֵל
and enter
H935

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 22:28 (Parallel theme): Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

Zechariah 7:10 (Parallel theme): And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

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

Jeremiah 22:3 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

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.

James 1:27 (Parallel theme): Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.