

Proverbs 24:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Analysis

This verse confronts the excuse 'We knew it not' for failing to help the endangered (v. 11). You cannot plead ignorance before God, who 'considereth the heart' and 'knoweth it.' He who 'keepeth thy soul' sees everything; He who 'rendereth to every man according to his works' will judge your inaction. This emphasizes both divine omniscience (God knows what we truly knew) and accountability (we will answer for failure to help). Willful ignorance doesn't excuse; God judges both what we knew and what we should have known. Closing eyes to injustice doesn't eliminate responsibility. This should motivate vigilance regarding others' needs and readiness to intervene. God will require an account of our stewardship, including how we treated vulnerable neighbors.

Historical Context

Israel would be judged for oppressing the poor, widows, and orphans. Claims of ignorance didn't excuse covenant violations. God held His people accountable for justice.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What needs or injustices are you aware of that you're pretending not to see?
2. How does knowing God 'considereth the heart' affect your response to others' dangers?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	תֹאמַר	הֵן	לֹא	יָדַע	הֵן	הָלַא
H3588	If thou sayest	H2005	H3808	Behold we knew	H2088	H3808
	H559			H3045		
	וְ	תִּכְ	לֵב	וְ	יִבֵּן	וְ
	it not doth not he that pondereth	the heart	H1931	consider	it and he that keepeth	
	H8505	H3826		H995	H5341	
נַפְשְׁךָ	וְ	יָדַע	וְ	יִבֵּן	לְ	כָל
thy soul	H1931	Behold we knew	it and shall not he render	to every man		
H5315		H3045	H7725	H120		
כַּפְּעָלוֹ:						
according to his works						
H6467						

Additional Cross-References

Job 34:11 (Parallel theme): For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.

Revelation 2:23 (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Proverbs 21:2 (Parallel theme): Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Romans 2:6 (Parallel theme): Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Psalms 121:8 (Parallel theme): The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Psalms 121:3 (Parallel theme): He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Jeremiah 17:10 (Parallel theme): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 (Parallel theme): If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

1 Samuel 16:7 (Parallel theme): But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Psalms 62:12 (Parallel theme): Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.