

Proverbs 24:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

Analysis

This command addresses authority and stability. 'My son, fear thou the LORD and the king' (ברא-את-יהה בני מלך/yera-et-YHWH beni vamelekh, fear the LORD, my son, and the king) places divine and human authority together. 'Fear' (ירא/yare) means reverent submission, not terror. The order is significant—God first, then king. When they conflict, 'we ought to obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29). Yet normally, submission to governing authorities honors God (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). 'Meddle not with them that are given to change' (עמ-שׂונים אל-תתְעַרֵּב/im-shonim al-tit'arav, with changers do not associate) warns against revolutionaries who seek to overthrow established order. The Hebrew (שׂונים) shonim means 'those who change/differ'—rebels, agitators. Wisdom values stability over revolution, though this doesn't endorse tyranny—prophets confronted wicked kings (1 Samuel 15:22-23; 2 Samuel 12:7).

Historical Context

Israel's monarchy began with Saul (1 Samuel 10) and reached its apex under Solomon. Despite various kings' wickedness, Scripture emphasizes respecting royal authority. David refused to kill Saul despite opportunity, because Saul was 'the LORD's anointed' (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9). Later kings often oppressed Israel, yet prophets called for submission except when royal commands violated God's law. Daniel obeyed Nebuchadnezzar except when commanded to worship idols (Daniel 3: 6). In the Roman period, Jews chafed under foreign rule. Zealots advocated violent revolution. Yet Jesus said, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the

things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's' (Matthew 22:21). Paul commanded submission to governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7), written while Nero reigned. Peter likewise (1 Peter 2:13-17). Early Christians mostly avoided political revolution, though they refused to worship the emperor or deny Christ.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you balance submitting to governing authorities while maintaining ultimate loyalty to God?
2. Are there areas where you're drawn to revolutionary thinking rather than working within established order?
3. When does civil disobedience become necessary because human authority contradicts God's?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה יְהֹוָה בָּבָרָה תְּמַלֵּךְ עַמּוֹ

fear H853 thou the LORD My son and the king H5973

H3372 H3068 H1121 H4428

שְׁוֹרֵם אֵל תַּתְעַרְבֶּן

not with them that are given to change and meddle

H8138 H408 H6148

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 12:16 (Kingdom): So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David?

neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

Titus 3:1 (Parallel theme): Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

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