

Proverbs 24:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

Analysis

This verse introduces a new section: 'These things also belong to the wise' (גַּם־אֵלֶּה לַחַכְמִים/gam-eleh lachakhamim, these also are for/of the wise). The following verses (23-34) constitute additional wisdom sayings. The immediate topic is judicial partiality: 'It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment' (הַפְּרִיץ פָּנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט/hakker-panim bamishpat bal-tov, showing partiality in judgment is not good). The law repeatedly forbade this: 'Ye shall not respect persons in judgment' (Deuteronomy 1:17); 'Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons' (Deuteronomy 16:19). James condemned it in the church: 'if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin' (James 2:9). God Himself shows no partiality (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). Judges must decide based on truth and law, not the litigants' status, wealth, or relationship. Partiality perverts justice, oppresses the vulnerable, and violates God's character.

Historical Context

Ancient judicial systems constantly battled corruption through partiality. Wealthy and powerful individuals could influence judges through bribes, threats, or social pressure. The poor had minimal recourse. Moses commanded judges: 'Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously... Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's' (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). Despite this, corruption persisted. Prophets condemned judges who accepted bribes and favored the wealthy (Isaiah 1:23; 5:23; Micah 3:11; Amos 5:12). Jesus faced partial judges—Pilate knew He was innocent but yielded to political pressure (Matthew

27:24; John 19:12). The early church struggled with partiality favoring wealthy members (James 2:1-9). Church courts (handling disputes among believers, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) needed reminding to judge impartially. Throughout history, Christian judicial reforms emphasized equal treatment regardless of status—rooted in the biblical principle that God judges without partiality.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. In what areas—workplace, church, family, community—might you show partiality based on status, wealth, relationship, or appearance?
2. How does knowing that God judges without partiality shape your treatment of people from different backgrounds?
3. What steps can you take to ensure fair, impartial treatment of everyone you encounter or have authority over?

Interlinear Text

גַּם	אֵלֶּה	לְחֵכְמִים	הֵכָר	פְּנֵי יָם
H1571	H428			
These things also belong to the wise		to have respect	of persons	
		H2450	H5234	H6440
בְּמִשְׁפָּט	בֵּל	טוֹב:		
H4941	H1077	H2896		
in judgment	It is not good			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:21 (Good): To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.

Proverbs 18:5 (Judgment): It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Psalms 107:43 (Parallel theme): Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Leviticus 19:15 (Judgment): Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Proverbs 1:6 (Parallel theme): To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

John 7:24 (Judgment): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Judgment): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Deuteronomy 1:17 (Judgment): Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

James 3:17 (Good): But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Hosea 14:9 (Parallel theme): Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.