

Proverbs 31:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

Analysis

Open thy mouth for the dumb—The Hebrew illem (לֵּלֵם, mute/speechless) describes those unable to advocate for themselves. **In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction** translates בְּנֵי חָלוֹף (benei chalof), literally 'sons of passing away' or those vulnerable to being forgotten/destroyed. This is the first command of the eshet chayil (אִשָּׁת חַיִּיל, woman of valor) section—righteous advocacy precedes domestic virtue.

The call to **open thy mouth** (פֶּתַח-פִּיָּךְ, petach-pikha) means active vocal defense, not silent charity. This echoes the prophetic tradition where God demands His people speak for the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 22:3). Christ Himself was 'dumb before his shearers' (Isaiah 53:7) but now we must speak for those who cannot.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite) protected the vulnerable, but biblical law uniquely demands proactive advocacy, not just reactive justice. In Israel's patriarchal society, widows, orphans, and foreigners depended on righteous advocates to ensure covenant justice.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Who are the 'dumb' in contemporary society who need your voice—the unborn, the elderly, the marginalized?
2. How does advocacy for the voiceless flow from the character of God who 'executes justice for the fatherless and widow' (Deuteronomy 10:18)?
3. What is the difference between paternalistic charity and the biblical call to empower the powerless through advocacy?

Interlinear Text

פֶּתַח	פִּי יְךָ	לְאִלֵּם	לְ	יְיָ	כֹל
Open	thy mouth	for the dumb	H413	in the cause	H3605
H6605	H6310	H483		H1779	
בְּכָל		הַלְוִיָּהּ			
of all such as are appointed		to destruction			
H1121		H2475			
