

Ecclesiastes 7:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.

Analysis

Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city. The Hebrew chokmah (חָכָם, wisdom) provides strength (ta'az, תָּאֵץ) surpassing physical or military power. Ten mighty men (shalitim, שָׁלִיטִים)—powerful rulers or warriors—represent concentrated human strength, yet wisdom gives superior advantage. This proverb demonstrates wisdom's practical superiority over brute force.

Solomon had witnessed how strategic wisdom outmaneuvered armies (2 Samuel 20:16-22, where one wise woman saved a city). Proverbs 21:22 echoes this: 'A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty.' Wisdom provides discernment to avoid conflicts, insight to resolve problems, and understanding to navigate complex situations—advantages raw power cannot match. Paul later affirmed that God's 'foolishness' is wiser than human strength (1 Corinthians 1:25), and spiritual wisdom in Christ surpasses all earthly power.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cities maintained garrison forces for defense—'ten mighty men' represented substantial military strength. City elders relied on both military power and wise counsel for governance. Solomon's own wisdom saved lives through discernment (1 Kings 3:16-28) and secured peace through diplomacy rather than conquest during most of his reign. In Israel's covenant framework, God provided wisdom to leaders as more valuable than military might (Deuteronomy

4:6). The wisdom literature tradition consistently elevated understanding over force—a countercultural claim in warrior societies. Jesus embodied this principle, conquering through apparent weakness rather than political or military power (Philippians 2:6-8).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. In what current situations are you tempted to rely on force, position, or power rather than seeking wisdom?
2. How does this verse challenge worldly assumptions about what constitutes real strength and security?

Interlinear Text

חֵי וְאֵשׁ רַשְׁלִיט יְמִים	מַעֲשֶׂרֶת	לִפְנֵי מֵת	תַּעֲזֵז	בְּחֵכֶם הָ	וְשָׁגַבְתָּ
mighty	more than ten	the wise	strengtheneth	Wisdom	
H834	H7989	H2450	H5810	H2451	H1961

בָּבּוּרִים:

men which are in the city

H5892

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:22 (Parallel theme): A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Proverbs 24:5 (Parallel theme): A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

