

Ecclesiastes 7:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Analysis

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof (טוב אחרית דבר, tov acharit davar me'reshito)—The 'end' (acharit) of a matter proves its true value more than its promising 'beginning' (reshito). This principle applies to projects, relationships, and life itself (see 7:1). What begins with excitement may end in disappointment; what begins with difficulty may yield great fruit. Perseverance reveals character.

The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit (ארך רוח גבה-רווח, erekh ruach...gabah-ruach)—'Patient' translates erekh ruach, literally 'long of spirit,' the same phrase describing God's patience (Exodus 34:6). In contrast, 'proud' (gabah) means 'haughty' or 'arrogant.' Patient endurance reflects God's character; impatient pride demands immediate results and recognition. Proverbs 16:32 similarly exalts self-control: 'He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty.'

Historical Context

Solomon's culture valued honor and achievement, making the virtue of patience countercultural. Ancient Near Eastern kings built monuments celebrating their beginnings—palace dedications, military campaigns—but history judges them by their endings. Many of Israel's kings 'began well' but ended in apostasy (e.g., Solomon himself, 1 Kings 11:1-13; Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). The New Testament echoes this principle: Paul could say 'I have finished the race' (2 Timothy 4:7), and Jesus declared 'It is finished' (John 19:30). The emphasis on

patient endurance appears throughout Scripture as a mark of genuine faith (James 5:7-11, Hebrews 12:1-2).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What projects or commitments have you begun with enthusiasm but struggle to finish well? What would 'patient endurance' look like?
2. How does pride manifest as impatience in your life—demanding quick results, recognition, or vindication rather than trusting God's timing?

Interlinear Text

אָרֶן	ט	וּבָ	מִרְאָשִׁית	וְ	זֶבֶר	אַחֲרֵי	יְתָם	ט	וּבָ
Better	is the end	of a thing	than the beginning		Better	thereof and the patient			
H2896	H319	H1697	H7225		H2896	H750			
רֹומָן:	מִגְבָּה	רֹומָן:							
in spirit	than the proud	in spirit							
H7307	H1362	H7307							

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:36 (Parallel theme): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Proverbs 14:29 (Spirit): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

1 Peter 1:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

James 5:11 (Parallel theme): Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Luke 21:19 (Parallel theme): In your patience possess ye your souls.

James 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Galatians 5:22 (Spirit): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Proverbs 15:18 (Parallel theme): A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Proverbs 16:32 (Spirit): He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Proverbs 13:10 (Parallel theme): Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.