

Proverbs 12:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Analysis

He that is despised and has a servant is better than he that honors himself and lacks bread. Modest means with servant (implying productive work providing employment) beats poverty with pretension. This verse criticizes vanity preferring appearance above substance. Better to be humble with resources than proud without necessities. True honor comes from productive labor, not self-promotion.

Historical Context

Reflects ancient economy where having servants indicated economic productivity and stability. Self-important poverty was both foolish and shameful compared to humble sufficiency.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Are you more concerned with appearing successful or actually being productive?
2. How much energy goes to self-promotion versus actual value-creation?

Interlinear Text

בְּרִיא	נִמְלֵה	לֹא	יְעַבֵּד	לֹא	מִתְּכַבֵּד	לֹא
is better	He that is despised	and hath a servant		H0	than he that honoureth	
H2896	H7034	H5650			H3513	
וְעַמְלֵךְ	לֹא					
himself and lacketh	bread					
H2638	H3899					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 14:11 (Parallel theme): For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Proverbs 13:7 (Parallel theme): There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.