

Proverbs 16:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

Analysis

The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. Chamat-meleh^h mal'akhey-mavet (חָמָת־מֶלֶךְ מַלְאֲכֵי־מָוֵת), the wrath of a king—messengers of death). Royal anger dispatches death like sending messengers. Ve'ish chakham yekhaperennah (וְאֵשׁ חָכָם יְקַהֵרֶנָה), but a wise man will pacify it). Kaphar (כַּפֵּר, atone, pacify, appease) describes the wise person's skillful calming of dangerous wrath. Ancient kings wielded absolute power—provoking their anger meant death. Wisdom navigates this perilously. Ultimately, God's wrath requires atonement only Christ provides (Romans 5:9).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern monarchs held life-and-death authority. Provoking royal wrath brought execution (Esther 1:12-22, Daniel 2:12-13). Wise courtiers like Esther (Esther 5:1-8), Abigail (1 Samuel 25), and the wise woman of Abel (2 Samuel 20:16-22) pacified dangerous anger through prudence. The proverb taught survival skills in royal courts while pointing to deeper truth—God's wrath requires the perfect Wise Man, Christ, to pacify it through atonement.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when facing anger from authority figures—with wisdom or foolishness?
2. In what sense is God's wrath like a king's, and how has Christ pacified it for believers?
3. What does wise, Spirit-led communication look like when addressing difficult authority figures?

Interlinear Text

חָמֵת כִּי לְגַם מֶלֶךְ מְלָאכִי מֵת מֵשׁ אֵין שָׁכְנָה:
The wrath of a king is as messengers of death man but a wise will pacify
H2534 H4428 H4397 H4194 H376 H2450 H3722

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:2 (Kingdom): The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.

Proverbs 19:12 (Judgment): The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.