

Proverbs 16:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Analysis

This proverb values self-control over military strength: 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' Conquering cities demonstrated military prowess and earned fame in the ancient world. Yet Proverbs declares that ruling one's own spirit (moshel berucho) surpasses such achievements. 'Slow to anger' (erekh appayim—literally 'long of nostrils,' patient, forbearing) describes self-controlled temperament. Verse 32 thus prizes internal mastery over external conquest. Jesus embodied this—'meek and lowly in heart' (Matthew 11:29) yet possessing all authority. This proverb anticipates New Testament teaching on self-control as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures glorified military conquest and warrior prowess. Kings boasted of cities captured and enemies defeated. Against this backdrop, Proverbs radically revalues achievement—self-mastery exceeds conquest. This countercultural wisdom prepared for Jesus' upside-down kingdom where the meek inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5) and leaders serve rather than dominate (Mark 10:42-45).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. In what situations do you struggle most to control your temper or emotions, and how can you grow in patient self-mastery?
2. How does culture's glorification of external success and achievement conflict with Scripture's valuation of internal character?

Interlinear Text

טַבַּת	אֵרֶב	אַפִּים	מִגְבָּרֶת	וְרֹאשֶׁת	וְמִשְׁלָחָן	רֹוחַ
is better	He that is slow	to anger	than the mighty	and he that ruleth	his spirit	
H2896	H750	H639	H1368	H4910		H7307
מִלְכָּה	עִירָה					
than he that taketh	a city					
H3920	H5892					

Additional Cross-References

James 1:19 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

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

Proverbs 25:28 (Spirit): He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

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

Proverbs 19:11 (Parallel theme): The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

Romans 12:21 (Parallel theme): Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Psalms 103:8 (Parallel theme): The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Ephesians 5:1 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Proverbs 16:19 (Spirit): Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

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