

Proverbs 26:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,

Analysis

Like a madman shooting deadly firebrands and arrows is one who deceives his neighbor and says 'I was only joking.' The Hebrew 'mithlahleha' (madman) and 'ziqqiyim' (firebrands/flaming arrows) emphasize dangerous recklessness. Someone throwing firebombs randomly is dangerously insane. Deceiving others then claiming 'just kidding' is similarly reckless. Hurtful words don't become harmless by being labeled jokes. This condemns mockery disguised as humor - wounding others then denying responsibility.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare used flaming arrows to ignite enemies' supplies and structures. Random firebomb attacks would be catastrophic. Similarly, deceptive 'jokes' inflict real harm. James 3:6 describes tongue as 'fire, a world of iniquity...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature.' Modern 'just kidding' culture weaponizes humor - insult people then claim 'can't you take a joke?' True humor doesn't wound; weaponized humor harms then denies responsibility.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What hurtful statements have you excused as 'just joking' to avoid accountability?
2. How can you ensure your humor builds up rather than tears down?
3. What 'flaming arrows' have you shot at others while claiming innocence?

Interlinear Text

כְּ, מִתְלַהֵלָה	הַיָּד הַ	זֶקֶן יָם	חֶצֶץ יָם	וּמָוֶת:
As a mad	man who casteth	firebrands	arrows	and death
H3856	H3384	H2131	H2671	H4194

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 25:18 (Parallel theme): A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.