

True Heroes

Ponder: Who are the real heroes?

Scripture: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32, NKJV).

General George Washington took his Continental Army troops across the Delaware River on Christmas night, 1776, and defeated the Hessian mercenaries at Trenton, NJ, the next morning. Despite previous defeats, low morale, supply shortages, insufficient troops, and horrible weather, General Washington and his troops displayed remarkable courage and strength. Washington used brilliant strategy by launching the surprise attack. Americans rightly view him as a hero.

Taking nothing away from General Washington or any other military hero, we point out the wise words of King Solomon in today’s Scripture (quoted above). Remember that Solomon’s own father, King David, was a great military hero – perhaps the greatest Israel ever had. So Proverbs 16:32 is not a put-down of respected victors in the armed forces. It simply points out that the one who has the moral strength to control his own temper and other passions qualifies as an even greater hero.

I was struck by this observation from A. R. Fausset’s commentary on this verse, p. 470. “He who conquers himself is of use to himself, and injures none; whereas a mighty hero conquers with much bloodshed. The mighty hero conquers by the hand of others; he that is slow to anger conquers in himself, and by himself; and conquers not only men (as the mighty hero), but also ‘the rulers of the darkness of this world’ (Ephesians 6:12).”

Truly, controlling one’s inner person by self-discipline proves more difficult than controlling other people by brute force. Even the celebrated King David failed, at times, to master his own spirit. We think immediately of the shameful incident of adultery with Bathsheba; but he also had issues with his temper. On one occasion he was ready to wipe out an entire clan because one man in that clan insulted him. “May God do so, and more also . . . if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light” (1 Samuel 25:22). God’s grace and Abigail’s wise intercession restrained him.

Physical strength and military brilliance have their advantages. But Solomon is right – ruling over our own spirit accomplishes something greater still.

Song: “Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen”

Prayer: Blessed Father, how will we ever gain control over ourselves? Please be merciful to us as we struggle to rule over our tempers and other passions. Forgive our failures, and make us more and more like Jesus. We pray in His name, Amen.

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