

Hearts Filled with Kindness

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Proverbs 19:22 states it plainly, “**What is desired in a man is kindness.**” Webster defines this familiar English word, “**kindness,**” and helps us learn that what God desires in a man is to be “sympathetic, friendly, gentle, tender-hearted, generous.” There are many attributes that are to characterize the child of God: he is to be humble (Jas. 4:10), meek (Matt. 5:5), compassionate (1 Pet. 3:8), diligent (2 Pet. 1:5), honest (Eph. 4:5), steadfast (1 Cor. 15:58). The list could go on and on. One quality that the heart of a righteous man cannot exist without is **kindness.**

In the New Testament, kindness is a trait on which God places a great emphasis for Christians. As Paul considered his labor and service to God he said, “But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers to God...by **kindness**” (2 Cor. 6:4-6). [All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted and **bold** type has been used within Scripture quotations for emphasis.] Listed alongside “love, joy, peace, longsuffering...goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” in the fruit of the Spirit is “**kindness**” (Gal. 5:22-23). In describing the new man which is to characterize one whose “life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), Paul instructs Christians, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies,

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kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Col. 3:12-13). Included in God's steps for Christian growth, designed so that a child of God "will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," Peter writes the following: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly **kindness**, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Pet. 1:8, 5-7).

In order to faithfully serve God, in order to bear the fruit of the Spirit, in order to put on the new man, in order to grow as a Christian to the point that one "will never stumble" (2 Pet. 1:10), the heart of the righteous must be filled, characterized, influenced and guided by **kindness**.

It is in the book of Proverbs that we find God's wisdom about human relationships and the **kindness** that is to rule those relationships. God offers His wisdom in practical, day-to-day instructions which can be easily implemented in our lives. "Prudent and moral behavior is the concern of Proverbs; it is God's **how-to-do-it manual**. It teaches the skill of getting along sensibly in life while at the same time pleasing God" (Smith 457, emp. added).

When one reads the book of Proverbs and takes time to slowly digest its profound wisdom, one cannot help but be impressed by the reality "that God is so vitally interested in the smallest details of the daily walk of His children" (Jensen 287). God wants us to get the "big things" right in our life, but He is also equally concerned about the "small things." Otto Zoekler observed,

We look into this book, and, as by the aid of the microscope, we see the minuteness of our

Christian obligations; that there is not a temper, a look, a word, a movement, the most important action of the day, the smallest relative duty, in which we do not either deface or adorn the image of our Lord, and the profession of His name (3).

The God of heaven is concerned with how His children treat each other and those outside the body of Christ. He not only wants us to *live* right in the eyes of men ("Let your light so shine before men, that they may see...", Matt. 5:16), but He also wants us *do* right to all men as well ("Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them," Matt. 7:12). In the book of Proverbs, God sums it up in this way, "**Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so**" (3:27). Our Father expects us to have hearts that are filled with kindness, which will be apparent in every interaction that we have with our fellowman:

- (1) *in our words,*
- (2) *in the use of our possessions, and*
- (3) *in the way we treat others, particularly those who wrong us.*

KINDNESS IN MY WORDS

Jesus unequivocally connected one's heart with one's mouth. He explained that "those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart" (Matt. 15:18). While it is not possible for man to look upon another man's heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7), Jesus let us know that by hearing and examining a man's words, the heart of that man would be revealed. How can I know if the heart of another is filled with kindness? Or better yet, how can I know or others know if my own heart is filled with kindness? The book of Proverbs yields more about

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kindness and more about how kindness is revealed in our speech than any other book in the Bible. Inspired by God, it is truly heaven's commentary on Jesus' link of the heart to the mouth, or even in reverse, of the mouth to the heart.

In the beautiful portrait of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is a virtue that needs to govern each of us, men and women. There was a law that she enforced upon herself that set her apart from anyone else. Before a single utterance came from her lips, it first had to pass through this Divine filter. Proverbs 31:26 states, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, And **on her tongue is the law of kindness.**" This law was on her tongue and governed her tongue because it was first imbedded in her heart. While God realizes and even reveals to us that taming the tongue is a difficult, yea impossible, task (cf. Jas. 3:1-12), such knowledge is not a license to say, "Oh, well! Since 'no man can tame the tongue' (Jas. 3:8), then there's no sense in trying." Virtuous Christians (men and women, old and young) must strive day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute to bridle their tongue against many evils and set their hearts and mouths on a course of kindness.

The wisdom of Proverbs is often written and illustrated in contrasts—posing two behaviors or attitudes against each other to explain in simple terms and even visual expressions the wisdom in the one and the folly in the other. God knew that man often best understands what a word or a concept means by first understanding what the opposite of that word or concept is. For example, when we try to understand the Biblical concept of meekness, we will often say, "Meekness is not weakness." Before we ever define the term, we explain what it is not. Contrasts help us to have a wide-angle view of a matter. When God spoke about a Christian's giving, He could have focused simply on the positive attitude needed by

only saying to give cheerfully. Instead, He painted for us the contrast between two types of hearts that might give – “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, **not** grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Contrasts help us to see both sides of a matter and to plainly see on which side we need to plant ourselves.

Consider how God draws contrasts in the great book of Proverbs of how our words might proceed out of the mouth with kindness (for positive results) or proceed out of the mouth without kindness (for terrible results).

WHERE IS KINDNESS FOUND...?

In the multitude of words or the restraint of words?

“In the **multitude of words** sin is not lacking, But he who **restrains** his lips is wise” (Prov. 10:19). There is a real tendency among some to assume that more words are better than few or even none. Yet, the more words a man speaks, the more likely he is to say something that should not be said (whether that be an untruth or even an unkind word). Amidst a multitude of words will surely be idle words, and may we never forget “that for **every** idle word men may speak, **they will give account of it in the day of judgment**. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37).

Mouths governed by the law of kindness exercise a **restraint** of words rather than allow unrestraint in the multitude of words. Kindness is not always found in what one says; sometimes it is found in what one does **not** say. “He who has knowledge **saves** his words” (Prov. 17:27). Kindness “**guards** his mouth and tongue [and] keeps his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23). Wisdom, knowledge and kindness will lead every Christian to **restrain** his lips,

spare his words, **guard** his mouth and be “slow to speak” (Jas. 1:19).

In revealing or concealing?

“A talebearer **reveals** secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit **conceals** a matter” (Prov. 11:13). Is kindness to be found in revealing secrets or concealing them? The human inclination sometimes is to tell everything that we know or think we know, and everything that we hear or think we hear. This ties in with restraining our words and focuses in on a specific aspect of that restraint—the matter of spreading secrets, slander or rumors, whether they be true or not.

Talebearers are spoken of often in the book of Proverbs—he “reveals secrets” (11:13; 20:19); his words “are like tasty trifles” (18:8; 26:22); and where he is absent “strife ceases” (26:20). There is no question how God views this one—“Whoever **spreads slander** is a fool” (10:18). Not only does God look down on these actions, but He shows one of the ultimate consequences of this kind of behavior. In Proverbs 16:28, He refers to this person as a “**whisperer**.” In Proverbs 17:9, it is “one who **repeats a matter**.” In both of these passages, God says that such unwarranted revealing of sensitive information “separates friends” (17:9), even “the best of friends” (16:28).

Instead of **revealing** secrets, God’s children are to be those “of a faithful spirit” who **conceal** a matter. This is not done to be deceitful or dishonest or arrogant or even to condone a sinful act in any way. That’s not the motivation under discussion. There are times that we must conceal a matter out of faithful devotion to those we love (cf. 11:13). “He who **covers a transgression seeks love**” (17:9). Sin has consequences and sin must be dealt with, but it is not

the place of a child of God to maliciously repeat matters. The New Testament teaches us not to be “gossips and busybodies, saying things which [we] ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13). Mouths governed by the law of kindness will refrain from such activity in our own lives, and Proverbs 20:19 teaches us not even to associate with “him that openeth wide his lips” (ASV).

In piercing through or promoting health?

“There is one who speaks like the **piercings of a sword**, But the tongue of the wise **promotes health**” (Prov. 12:18). We can use our words to cut someone and even pierce them through, or our words can bring strength and well-being to someone’s life. On which side will kindness be found? That is not to say that our words should never be pointed, sharp, straightforward and unyielding, for there are times that warnings must be sounded (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15), truth must prevail (Gal. 4:16; Prov. 23:23) and “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) must be allowed to cut to the hearts, “piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and [discerning] the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Still, if the law of kindness governs my tongue, then it will seek to **promote health** and not weakness or failing. Proverbs 15:4 states, “A **wholesome** tongue is a **tree of life**, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.” Would you characterize your speech as promoting health and a wholesome life or piercing and breaking the spirit? The answer to that question will be a real indicator of which law rules your speech. Sometimes individuals are more prone to tearing someone else down than they are to building them up. Let us ponder and then practice these words of exhortation, “Let **no corrupt word** proceed out of

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your mouth, but what is good for **necessary edification**, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

Little do most of us realize the power we have in this "little member" of our body (cf. Jas. 3:5). It wields such influence, that Solomon wrote, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue**, And those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21). Wisdom, knowledge and kindness will lead every Christian to seek to **promote healthy lives** to those around them imparting kindness, grace, love and necessary edification through their words.

In speaking truth or lies?

"**Lying lips** are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal **truthfully** are His delight" (Prov. 12:22). The book of Proverbs leaves no doubt how God feels about liars. It is "an abomination" to Him, mentioned at least twice in the list of those things which He **hates**—"a lying tongue...a false witness who speaks lies" (Prov. 6:16-19). "A **false witness** will not go unpunished, And he who **speaks lies** will not escape" (Prov. 19:5). Verse 9 of that same chapter repeats this verse almost word-for-word, but the second half of the verse says, "And he who speaks lies **shall perish.**"

Those who lie have **no regard** for those to whom they speak the lie. In fact, "A **lying tongue hates** those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin" (Prov. 26:28). The law of kindness does not direct the tongue of those who speak lies. The New Testament directs Christians, "**Do not lie** to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9), and Ephesians 4:25 charges, "Therefore, **putting away lying**, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."

Speaking lies is not only an indication of a lack of kindness in someone's heart, it is also contrary to the God we serve, the one "who cannot lie" (Tit. 1:2), for "it is impossible" (Heb. 6:18). "The **truthful lip** shall be established forever, But a **lying tongue** is but for a moment" (Prov. 12:19). Wisdom, knowledge and kindness will lead every Christian to steadfastly determine, "My mouth will speak truth" (Prov. 8:7).

In soft answers or harsh words?

"A **soft answer** turns away wrath, But a **harsh word** stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). For many folks, harsh words are easier, and maybe even more natural for them, than soft answers. Yet, if a Christian's tongue is kept by the law of kindness, then it will be evident not only in the words he chooses but **the tone** in which he speaks. Proverbs 15:28 affirms, "The heart of the righteous **studies how to answer**," and that man who studies **how to answer** is "a man who **has joy** by the answer of his mouth" (Prov. 15:23). Even in the New Testament, there are a multitude of admonitions about the words that we speak, yet the right words spoken in the wrong manner or with the wrong tone are no good. Paul challenges Christians, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). Wisdom, knowledge and kindness will lead every Christian to realize that "the words of the pure are pleasant...like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. 15:26; 16:24).

In timing or teasing?

It was from the first four words of a beautiful passage in Proverbs 25:11 that John D. Cox borrowed the title for his autobiography and collection of writings—"A **word fitly spoken** is like apples of gold in settings of

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silver.” The **right** words spoken at the **right** time **fit** so well and are of such value that they truly are “like apples of gold in settings of silver.” Solomon stated it simply earlier in the book, “**A word spoken in due season, how good it is!**” (15:23). Sometimes we place a great deal of pressure on ourselves trying to **quickly** come up with the **words** that we need to speak in certain situations. But let us not be hasty in choosing the wrong words! In the book that is frequently called “The Book of Proverbs in the New Testament,” James tells us, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). If we choose not to heed these words, let us remember Proverbs 29:20, “Do you see a man **hasty in his words**? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Another interesting point to consider is the simple difference between the spelling of these two—“a **word** (singular) fitly spoken” and “hasty in his **words** (plural).” It may be that God intentionally chose the singular rather than the plural to denote that which is “good.” The timing of what we say is important, and the brevity of the right word at the right time will fit beautifully.

The opposite of a word fitly spoken is a word that is unfit or inappropriate—either not the right words or not the right time or both. We live in a tasteless and offensive society where often times the wrong words are intentionally spoken at the wrong time to intentionally inflict as much pain, suffering and humiliation as possible. Then, to further capitalize on their boorish behavior, some are even inclined to wreak as much havoc as they can and then laugh it off by saying, “I was only joking.” Are you aware that the book of Proverbs addresses even these ill-mannered fiends? “Like a **madman** who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who **deceives** his neighbor, And says, ‘**I was only joking!**’” (Prov. 26:18-19).

Notice that God parallels one who spitefully abuses others and then claims he was joking with (1) a madman, and (2) the work of deceit. Just as we must “put away from [us] a deceitful mouth” (Prov. 4:24), we must put away from us the idea that we can legitimately mistreat someone and then back off and justify it by telling them, “I was only joking. You need to learn to take a joke.” Brethren, we need to teach this to our children. Wisdom, knowledge and kindness will not allow the Christian to use his mouth to hurt others!

If the law of kindness governs our tongues, then today’s Christian will strive to **restrain** his words, **conceal** certain matters, **promote** health and life, speak **truth**, provide **soft answers**, and do all of this in **due season**.

KINDNESS IN USING MY POSSESSIONS

While the Bible warns us repeatedly about the dangers of materialism, it never prohibits God’s children from having possessions. God’s only stipulation is that whatever we have (whether it be small or great, valuable or worthless, old or new, earned or rewarded) we use it properly as good and faithful stewards (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2).

First and foremost, the overriding requirement is found in Proverbs 3:9—“**Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase.**” The tendency is to believe and act as if our possessions, our firstfruits and our increase belong to us by virtue of our own hard work. Let us never forget this simple truth, “We brought **nothing** into this world” (1 Tim. 6:7). And while we think we have earned what we have, Paul questions, “And what do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Our money, our possessions, our homes, our everything **belong to God**—we are merely stewards who are responsible for honoring the Lord with

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our possessions, and not just our possessions, but the very firstfruits of ALL of our increase.

No matter whether we have a little or a lot, we have been blessed by God with everything that we have. Our Lord has been **generous** to us; He has had **mercy** on us; He has had **pity** on us. And it is with those same words that He describes our responsibility towards others who are in need. When it comes to the use of our possessions, "What is desired in a man is **kindness**" (Prov. 19:22).

Proverbs 29:7 claims, "The **righteous** considers the cause of the poor, But the wicked does not understand such knowledge." The righteous does not only "consider" their cause, "the righteous gives and does not spare" (Prov. 21:26). As Isaiah observed, "A **generous** man devises **generous** things, And by **generosity** he shall stand" (32:8). That's why God calls upon each of us in the book of Proverbs, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it,' When you have it with you" (Prov. 3:27-28).

To properly honor the Lord with our possessions, mercy and generosity are required. "He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But **he who honors Him has mercy on the needy**" (Prov. 14:31). We honor the merciful God by being merciful ourselves to those in need. We are honoring Him, for our actions, while done unto others, are done as if we are doing them unto the Lord Himself. "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord" (Prov. 19:17). This is reminiscent of the words of Jesus in Matthew 25, when He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (25:40). And "he who has

mercy on the poor, **happy is he**" (Prov. 14:21). True happiness comes when we turn the attention away from ourselves and seek to better the lives of others. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful" (Matt. 5:7).

The book of Proverbs teaches us not only to be generous, but it also pronounces the blessing that will come upon those who are. "He who has a **generous eye will be blessed**, For he gives of his bread to the poor" (Prov. 22:9). Notice how God promises to take care of those who take care of others: "There is one who scatters, **yet increases more**; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty" (Prov. 11:24). "The generous soul **will be made rich**, And he who waters will also be watered himself" (Prov. 11:25). "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And **[the Lord] will pay back what he has given**" (Prov. 19:17). "He who gives to the poor **will not lack**, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses" (Prov. 28:27).

The kind and generous soul increases more, will be made rich, will be paid back by the Lord what he gives to others, and he will not lack. The principle of "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7) is taught throughout the Scriptures. Instead of giving all of our attention and goods to friends, family and neighbors only, Jesus taught, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12-14). As Civilla D. Martin penned in 1904, "All you may need He will provide, **God will take care of you.**"

If a child of God chooses the road more frequently traveled of hoarding his possessions and selfishly keeping all that he has been blessed with to himself, God does not leave such a one to wonder about his fate. "Whoever shuts

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his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and **not be heard**" (Prov. 21:13). God will not hear the cries and petitions of a miserly man. Even more the promise is, "He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, And he who gives to the rich, will **surely come to poverty**" (Prov. 22:16). The promise in 2 Corinthians 9:6 rings out, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly." Devastating consequences await those who refuse to consider the cause of the poor—"He who hides his eyes **will have many curses**" (Prov. 28:27). God has declared, "He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow" (Prov. 22:8).

God desires for His children to have **hearts filled with kindness**. The lovingkindness of our God is expressed in the lovingkindness of His children when we honor the Lord with our possessions, when we do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when we consider the cause of the poor and then give without sparing, and when we model the godliness of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:20 by extending our "hand to the poor" and reaching out our "hands to the needy."

KINDNESS IN MY TREATMENT OF OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO WRONG ME

Doing unto others **as they do to you** is often the response that **we** desire but is never the response that **God** desires. Having a heart that is filled with kindness will not allow me to treat anyone else (including someone who has mistreated me) in a way not becoming a faithful, loving, compassionate child of God. Proverbs 11:23 reveals, "**The desire of the righteous is only good.**" This either reflects your desires or it does not. It either justifies your desires or it rebukes them. In our treatment of others, God wants us to know that "to do righteousness and justice Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Prov. 21:3). To be

righteous is to do righteousness. To be fair is to treat people fairly (i.e., with justice), even and especially those who mistreat us.

Kindness demands that I treat others, even my own enemies, with mercy. “Let not **mercy** and truth forsake you; **Bind** them around your neck, **Write** them on the tablet of your heart” (Prov. 3:3). We ought not to go anywhere without carrying mercy with us. We ought not to say anything without mercy accompanying our words. We ought not to think anything which would cause mercy to forsake us. “The **merciful** man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh” (Prov. 11:17).

Kindness, love and mercy will not even let a Christian take delight in the troubles, trials and misfortunes of his enemies. In the New Testament, Paul said, “**Love suffers long and is kind**; love...does not behave rudely...is not provoked, thinks no evil; **does not rejoice in iniquity**, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:4-6). Solomon wrote, “**Do not rejoice** when your enemy falls, **And do not let your heart be glad** when he stumbles” (Prov. 24:17). The kindness of Christianity will not allow me to do so.

Instead, God’s people are urged to smother their enemies with kindness—“If your enemy is hungry, **give** him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, **give** him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the Lord will reward you” (Prov. 25:21-22; cf. Rom. 12:20). Heaping “coals of fire” is not a license to be rude or to treat them with anything other than kindness. Coals of fire are only effective when they are heaped from a heart filled with kindness, for the one on whose head these fiery coals are heaped will ashamedly begin to realize that evil was not returned for evil. Brethren, it is hard to bite one’s

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tongue. It is hard to hold one's temper back. But, if we will set our minds to this task, we can, as Paul commanded right after quoting this verse from Proverbs 25, "not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**" (Rom. 12:21).

The book of wisdom instructs us, "Do not say, 'I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work'" (Prov. 24:29). Do not say it! Do not desire it! The New Testament repeatedly reminds Christians to guard their reactions to those who mistreat them. "Repay no one evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17). "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (1 Thess. 5:15). "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having **compassion** for one another; **love** as brothers, be **tenderhearted**, be **courteous**; **not returning evil for evil** or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9). There are blessings (yea, eternal blessings) that await those who with compassion, love and kindness control their reactions to mistreatment. Proverbs 20:22 pleads, "Do not say, 'I will recompense evil'; **Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.**" Wait for the Lord! Leave it in His hands—His very capable hands! "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

In order for kindness to permeate our minds, hearts, words and actions, we must learn to control our minds, hearts, words and actions. Solomon contends, "He who is **slow to anger** is better than the mighty, And he who **rules his spirit** than he who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32). James 1:19 has already been emphasized, but let us recall it again—"So then, my beloved brethren, let every

man be swift to hear, slow to speak, **slow to wrath.**" This requires that one rule his spirit. Proverbs 25:28 warns, "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls." When a Christian puts on meekness (cf. Col. 3:12), which is defined in Proverbs as controlling or ruling his spirit, he will be able to properly control his reactions to mistreatment and properly direct his strength of spirit to "overcome evil with good" and shower hot coals of kindness instead of hot tempers of bitterness. And God's promise to those who do this—**"And the Lord will reward you"** (Prov. 25:22).

While treating with Christ-like kindness those who mistreat us is a real challenge to twenty-first century Christians, it is nevertheless what Jesus would do, and even more it is what Jesus did. Consider how Jesus was mistreated. Consider how Jesus was challenged. Consider how Jesus was mocked, rebuked, reviled, lied to, lied about, persecuted, beaten, crucified. If there was ever One who ruled His spirit, it was Jesus. If there was ever One who overcame evil with good, it was Jesus. If there was ever One who showed us how to do it, it was Jesus.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

May we ever look unto Jesus as our perfect example of mercy and justice in the treatment of those who wrong us.

CONCLUSION

We have, in the twentieth book of our Old Testament, thirty-one chapters filled with 915 verses of heaven's wisdom for life. If we want a practical guide for living today, we have it—not only in the book of Proverbs but in the entirety of the Holy Scriptures. Remember that 2 Peter 1:3 not only says that we have “all things that pertain to...godliness,” but we also have “all things that pertain to **life**.” God says, “What is desired in a man is **kindness**” (Prov. 19:22), and then, instead of leaving us to figure out kindness for ourselves, He gives us truth after truth, principle after principle, example after example, instruction after instruction, proverb after proverb to know exactly what He desires. “The biblical proverbs are profound...These tasty tidbits are meant to be savored, not swallowed whole. On the surface the meaning of a proverb may seem obvious. Only through prolonged contemplation, however, will the true dimensions of these carefully crafted sayings be discovered” (464).

In looking at this wonderful Old Testament treasure, another writer observes:

“The book of Proverbs is very practical because it concerns the believer's daily walk. It does not include much doctrine, but it does emphasize practice...Proverbs truly shows how the believer 'may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things' (Titus 2:10, KJV). Even unbelievers recognize the value of Proverbs as a manual for conduct. How much more should it apply to Christians...to help them live the life it describes” (Jensen 292, 294).

May God help us to condition our hearts to be pliable to His word. May His demands for hearts and lives filled with kindness not be to us a burden (cf. 1 John 5:3)

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but a refreshing, pleasant, Christ-like way of life. May our tongues be governed by the law of kindness. May kindness and generosity regulate the use of our possessions. May mercy and kindness dictate how we treat others, especially those who mistreat us. May the example of Christ encourage and lead us in the words and paths of righteousness. May we all live our lives in such a way that the world, through our kindness, sees Christ living in us.

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