Proverbs 11:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

Analysis

The merciful man does good to his own soul, but he that is cruel troubles his own flesh. Mercy benefits the merciful person himself - kindness to others is ultimately self-blessing. Cruelty harms the cruel - brutality damages one's own humanity. This principle refutes purely utilitarian ethics while showing that virtue produces human flourishing. Mercy and cruelty both return to their source.

Historical Context

Reflects biblical theme that how we treat others affects our own souls. The mercy-judgment principle appears throughout Scripture - merciful receive mercy; merciless face judgment (Matt 5:7, James 2:13).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How has showing mercy to others blessed your own soul?
2. In what ways does cruelty toward others harm your own spiritual and emotional health?

Interlinear Text

שָׁ אֵר ׀ וֹ	גֹּמֵ ל	נַ פְשׁוֹ	אִ ישׁ	חָ סֶד	וְעֹכֵ ר
his own flesh	doeth good	to his own soul	man	The merciful	troubleth
H7607	H1580	H5315	H376	H2617	H5916

אַכְזָרִי:

but he that is cruel

H394

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 5:7 (Grace): Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

James 2:13 (Grace): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Isaiah 57:1 (Grace): The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

Daniel 4:27 (Grace): Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Philippians 4:17 (Parallel theme): Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.