

Proverbs 14:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

Analysis

He that despises his neighbor sins, but he that has mercy on the poor, happy is he. Contempt toward neighbors violates love commandment; mercy toward poor brings blessedness. The verse establishes both negative prohibition (don't despise) and positive command (show mercy). Despising neighbors is 'sin' (chata - missing the mark, transgression); mercy brings happiness (ashrey - blessed). Reformed theology sees here both moral obligation and eudaemonic promise - righteousness produces flourishing.

Historical Context

Reflects Torah's extensive provisions for poor (gleaning laws, Jubilee, charity commands). Covenant community was to show mercy mirroring God's mercy to them in Egypt's bondage.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Who do you despise that God commands you to show mercy toward?

2. How has showing mercy to poor brought blessing you wouldn't otherwise experience?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| בָּזֶה | לְרֵעַ הָוֶה | חִטָּה אֶת | וְמִתְחִילָה | עַלְיָה יְמִינָה |
| He that despiseth | his neighbour | sinneth | but he that hath mercy | on the poor |
| H936 | H7453 | H2398 | H2603 | H6035 |
| אָשָׁרְיוֹן | | | | |
| happy | | | | |
| H835 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:27 (Parallel theme): He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Proverbs 19:17 (Parallel theme): He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Proverbs 17:5 (Parallel theme): Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

Proverbs 11:12 (Parallel theme): He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

Proverbs 14:31 (Grace): He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

Hebrews 6:12 (Parallel theme): That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Acts 20:35 (Parallel theme): I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Psalms 22:24 (Parallel theme): For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Psalms 112:5 (Parallel theme): A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

Psalms 112:9 (Parallel theme): He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

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