

Proverbs 25:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Analysis

If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if thirsty, give him drink. For you'll heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you. The Hebrew 'oyeb' (enemy/hater) and 'gachelet esh' (coals of fire) create striking image. Respond to enemies with kindness, not retaliation. The 'coals of fire' likely means producing shame/conviction in enemy's conscience, potentially leading to repentance. God rewards this counterintuitive generosity. Romans 12:20-21 quotes this, adding: 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern ethics typically embraced lex talionis (eye for eye) or vengeance against enemies. Israel's law was revolutionary: 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again' (Exodus 23:4). Jesus intensified this: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you' (Matthew 5:44). Enemy-love demonstrates kingdom ethics.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Who are your 'enemies' and how might you practically demonstrate kindness toward them?
2. How does enemy-love reflect God's character and advance His kingdom?
3. What prevents you from feeding/giving drink to those who oppose you?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	גִּדְּלִים	אֶתְּהָה	חֹתֶה	עַל	רֹאשׁוֹ	יְהוָה
H3588	coals of fire	H859	For thou shalt heap	H5921	upon his head	and the LORD
	H1513		H2846		H7218	H3068
	יְשַׁלֵּם	לְךָ:				
	shall reward	H0				
	H7999					

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 16:12 (References Lord): It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

Matthew 10:13 (Parallel theme): And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.