

Proverbs 27:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Analysis

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. This proverb presents one of Scripture's most counter-intuitive truths about relationships. The Hebrew word *ne'emanim* (נאמנים, "faithful") describes reliability, trustworthiness, and covenant loyalty. True friendship demonstrates faithfulness not through constant affirmation but through loving truthfulness, even when painful. The "wounds" (*petsa'im*, פצעים) inflicted by a friend refer to the sharp pain of rebuke, correction, or difficult truth spoken in love.

The contrast with an enemy's kisses could not be starker. While kisses normally symbolize affection and intimacy, when offered by an enemy they become instruments of betrayal—think of Judas kissing Jesus to identify Him for arrest (Matthew 26:48-49), or Joab kissing Amasa before murdering him (2 Samuel 20:9-10). The Hebrew *nishkot* (נשיקות, "kisses") combined with *ateret* (עתרת, "deceitful" or "profuse") suggests excessive, insincere flattery designed to manipulate and destroy.

This wisdom teaches that **authentic love sometimes requires inflicting pain for another's good**, while false friendship offers pleasant lies that lead to harm. God Himself operates this way: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). The wounds of discipline, whether from God or godly friends, prove love's authenticity. Conversely, those who flatter us while harboring malice do far more damage than those who wound us with truth.

Historical Context

Proverbs 27 contains Solomon's wisdom on various aspects of relationships, wealth, and practical living. In ancient Near Eastern culture, **friendship carried profound significance as a covenant relationship** with mutual obligations of loyalty, protection, and honest counsel. The culture of honor and shame made public rebuke particularly costly, yet true friends valued each other's welfare above social comfort.

The ancient world was familiar with court intrigue, where enemies used flattery and false loyalty to position themselves for betrayal. The historical examples in Scripture bear this out: Absalom won hearts through manipulation before his coup (2 Samuel 15:1-6), Haman flattered Ahasuerus while plotting genocide (Esther 3), and false prophets spoke smooth words while leading people to destruction (Jeremiah 23:16-17). **The ability to discern true from false friends literally determined survival** in royal courts and social networks.

The emphasis on faithful wounds also reflects Israel's prophetic tradition. True prophets like Nathan confronted David's sin (2 Samuel 12:1-14), while false prophets proclaimed "Peace, peace" when there was no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). The proverb validates the difficult ministry of truth-telling and warns against preferring pleasant lies over painful realities.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Can you identify someone who has faithfully wounded you with truth, and how did that ultimately benefit you spiritually or practically?
2. In what relationships might you be offering flattering kisses rather than faithful wounds because you fear conflict or losing approval?

3. How does understanding Christ's faithful wounds (His rebukes and the discipline of suffering) deepen your appreciation for His friendship?
4. What criteria can help you distinguish between destructive criticism and faithful wounds that come from loving concern?
5. How can you cultivate both the courage to wound faithfully and the humility to receive wounds graciously?

Interlinear Text

שׁוֹאָה: תָּשִׁיל וְתִּנְעַטֶּר וְתִּאְמְנִים
 Faithful are the wounds of a friend are deceitful but the kisses of an enemy

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Additional Cross-References

Psalms 141:5 (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Revelation 3:19 (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Hebrews 12:10 (Parallel theme): For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Proverbs 10:18 (Parallel theme): He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.