

## Encouragement

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Good Morning Friend,

*Let not mercy and truth forsake you: Bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart: And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.* (Proverbs 3:3-4) The NKJV

All of us know fellow-Christians who have messed-up their lives, whether publicly or privately . . . whether in a small way or a large way. In fact, all of us . . . yes, you and me . . . have often "missed the mark" in our personal lives. For many of us, our failures might be known only to us. But we have failed Him. Even since letting Christ into our lives, none of us has flawlessly followed Him. As we remove our pharisaical spectacles, we look at this amazing text at the top of this page.

We begin by focusing on two words in verse three . . . *Let not MERCY and TRUTH forsake you.* In other words, don't ignore these qualities. Don't bypass them.

[f0b7] MERCY. What is it? Other translations suggest love, kindness . . . and grace. God, the Father, models mercy, absolutely and perfectly. David, Moses, Nehemiah, and other biblical authors frequently focus on this trait of the Father. As we study Jesus in the New Testament, we quickly discover that He ministered (and still does) with mercy . . . even to the adulteress woman, to the disreputable Zacchaeus to the thief on the cross . . . and to you and me in our desperate moments of need.

[f0b7] TRUTH. What is it? In this context it is honesty, integrity and truthfulness. Both the Old and the New Testaments teach us to live and speak honestly (Zechariah 8:16, and Ephesians 4:15). This latter verse more literally means that we are to be truthing. We are to live, think, and speak the truth . . . living in reality and integrity. Knowing the truth about ourselves and the truth about others.

Again, the text tells us to not forsake these two qualities. In fact, they are to be **wedded together**, living in us as a pair. . . not one without the other. Yes, we know the truth about our brother **YET** we deal with him in mercy and grace.

The text takes us deeper into practically understanding the usage of *mercy and truth* in ministering to one another. Look at these two phrases in the text . . .

[f0b7] *Bind them about your neck.* We are to wear them as a necklace. We are to wear them externally, so they are visibly seen by others. Twice in this third chapter, the word neck is found. Here in verse 3,

we are told to wear mercy and truth around the neck. In Verse 22, we are told to add grace to our necklace. What are the visible items on your necklace? What is the message that you send out to hurting people around you? Does your life shout criticism and judgment to others? Or, does your life offer hope and a new beginning for others?

[f0b7] *Write them on the tablet of your heart.* In your personal times before the Lord, have Him engrave these qualities on your heart. Often re-visit your heart to read and memorize these qualities, prayerfully asking God to make you a caring person, as defined in Proverbs 3:3.

Verse 4 guarantees us a generous pay-back for such a life. When you and I practice verse three, the result will be verse four . . . *we will find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.* I conducted a funeral service for a warm Christian friend earlier this week. He was widely loved and respected . . . in his family, in the church, in the community, and at his place of business. Believers and non-believers, both thought highly of him. As I have written this letter, I have had him in mind. He practiced mercy and truth. He wore the necklace well. These words were inscribed on his heart.

Grant the same for me and my readers, O Lord.

Be encouraged,

Lareau Lindquist