

The Glory of a Man **Proverbs 19:11**

*“A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger,
And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.”*

Introduction

Why would anyone be attracted to me?

Haven’t we all asked that question of ourselves at many points in our lives?

Kids in junior and senior high school wonder that because they want to be accepted.

College students ask that as they begin to contemplate marriage.

As we get older and feel the ravages of age, we experience a mid-life crisis.

We never seem to get away from it: Look at our culture’s infatuation with fitness, beauty and appearance. Are you tired of the beauty rat race, trying to measure up, trying to look pretty, smart, physically fit, bubbly, successful?

Is there a beauty you ought to pursue which transcends appearance?

The scripture says yes.

Proverbs 19:11 says your boast, greatness, beauty, or glory is to “*overlook transgressions.*”

The word “overlook” conveys the idea of passing by or moving beyond. It doesn’t mean ignore, that’s impossible.

God never asks you to pretend sin isn’t real. The idea is, when you are sinned against, keep going, keep that relationship moving, “*so far as it depends upon you.*” (Rom.12:18) In other words:

Don’t let anger stall you.

Don’t let un-forgiveness put you in a rut.

Don’t let a root of bitterness tie you to the ground.

Don’t hold a grudge in your hands so they’re not open them to receive God’s other blessings.

Consider four truths the verse assumes:

1. You will be sinned against.

This verse is given to people who live in a fallen world where there is a lot of sin. There are no sinless people on this earth. You have been and will be sinned against by all kinds of people (believer and unbeliever),

even those you think shouldn’t!! (Why do you expect *anyone* to be perfect in a fallen world?)

2. You will respond in one way or another.

We don’t have to pretend sins don’t hurt! The natural temptation is to be angry and unforgiving, to not get past it; notice how the first half of the verse, “*wisdom makes you slow to anger*”, sets up “*it is your glory to overlook a transgression.*” How you respond determines whether you live in a self-made prison of resentment, or move forward in freedom.

3. You don’t have to get stuck in bitter resentment.

That’s why the verse holds out the promise for you of a distinct spiritual beauty. Hebrews 12:14-15 warn about a root of bitterness.

4. Implicit behind this verse is the Biblical assertion that God is sovereign over these hurts.
1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.*

Therefore, you can be confident your conflicts are ordained by God *for your good* (Rom. 8:28). Everything God is doing in your life is designed to make you like Christ, especially afflictions and difficulties in relationships.

God uses these:

- To help you grow (refiner)
- To help you see your sin: faults of others are often like mirrors reflecting what we hide from ourselves
- To help you see how much grace you need
- There are many things you can do in your own strength, but not this!
- To help you see how great is His mercy and comfort to you
- To help you experience God's redemptive power
- To help you love others in ways they might never have known.

If God has His *purposes* in the offenses we suffer, then He also must have the *proscription* to remedy the injury. That means we have to use God's remedy, not our homespun concoctions. For example:

1. You will be tempted to treat the pain only, not the injury.
You try to cover the pain with pleasure, however you measure it. Substance abuse, leisure abuse, entertainment abuse- good things which aren't capable of healing deep wounds.
2. You'll try to be a very good person, thus showing in your self-righteousness that you are too good of a person to have been sinned against.
3. Perhaps you'll want to retreat, throw up walls of self-protection, and not let anyone in to your heart.
Perhaps you'll promise yourself never to take risks in relationships.
We think of Adam right after the fall. He was hiding, abdicating his leadership of Eve, fearful of intimacy.
4. You may become a pleaser, seeking other's approval as a way of reassuring yourself of your worth.
If your attitude is avoid conflict, peace at all costs, you're fearing man not God.
5. You may develop a mode of controlling others. Your sense of security comes from being in control, avoiding situations where you aren't in charge.

These are decidedly not God's solutions; the Triune God is utterly committed to harmony. What is God's remedy? How do you overlook, pass by or go beyond other's transgressions? This looks impossible because our vision is blurred, we need this kind of love demonstrated.

For a faithful Jew, one verse in Proverbs may help:

Prov.16:6 *By loving-kindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.*

This verse would have taken an OT believer to the sacrificial system of offering animals for sins. Therefore, to understand the full implications of it, this verse catapults us to the New Testament.

“God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...” (Rom.5:8

Here we see the great transgression eliminator: the cross of Jesus. At the cross Jesus promises to remove your sins from you! There is only **one way** to move past other’s offenses: put the cross between you and them. *“Forgive one another, as Christ has forgiven you...” (Col.3:13)* There is an amazing power in the cross experienced by those who take the time to stand beneath it.

When you ask for an open, humble heart, to know God, to see his glory, you will see in the cross both: the horrible consequences of your sin, putting Jesus there, holding your transgressions; and the unspeakable wonder of his love for you, willingly staying there.

The cross is the supreme concrete demonstration of the love of God.

1 John 4:10 *This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

The glorious revelation of the cross is divine love for sinners. That’s why Jesus said, John 15:12: *“love one another, just as I have loved you.”* You would never know the love of Christ if He hadn’t overlooked your transgressions, and taken you with Him to glory.

That’s the basis for the promise: *“love truly covers all transgressions.” (Prov.10:12)* 1 Peter 4:8 echoes this: *“Keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”*

Love covers transgressions means you refuse to harp on them, to reveal or expose them; instead, you bury any reason to put yourself above another person. God’s word teaches that the issue when others hurt you Did it hurt? Of course, that’s not the issue.

Was it wrong? Of course, that’s not the issue.

Should it not have happened? In a perfect world, of course not, that’s not the issue.

What is the issue?

Can you still love them? In a sense, you don’t know how much you love until you have to love the unloved. God’s agape love is unconditional; it doesn’t set conditions or terms, such as, I’ll love you when you’re right to me. *“Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.” (1 Cor.13:5)*

Jesus said a startling thing will happen if you stay long at the cross. Your vision will be improved!

“Take the log out of your eye, then you’ll actually be able to see the speck in another’s.” But what if another person objectively has sinned significantly against you?

It is cause for at least three responses from you.

First, it is a cause for pity and patience. Can’t you thank God for the grace you’ve received to not have been given over to sin as much as them? Realistically, what person among us could claim to have sinned less except by the sheer restraining mercy of God? Verses such as 2 Timothy 2:23-25 remind us that God does the changing:

“And the Lord’s bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wrong with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

Second, it is a cause for wisdom.

What kind of person are you dealing with?

Proverbs tells us how to act in the presence of a fool.

23:9 *Do not speak in the presence of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.*

There is a time for severing a relationship. If a girl is in an abusive relationship, if a spouse has broken the marriage covenant and refuses to return, if a church member sins and refuses to repent, if someone cheats you in business you aren't bound to keep doing business with them.

If this is a member of the Christian community you should first go to them alone to discuss the matter, and refrain from discussing it with anyone else. (Matt 18)

You are working toward reconciliation. (Galatians 6:1)

Sometimes justice is necessary. Turning the other cheek means refusing to take personal revenge. But seeking fair and just reparations does not have to be motivated by spite.

Third, it is a cause for self-examination. What's going on in your heart? Why *would* you stop and not pay by? Have you fastened yourself to a painful past as a way of excusing your present behavior?

Often it boils down to: how dare you offend me! But why not offend you? Who made you a person exempt from being offended? What are you believing about yourself to assert the right to not overlook an offense? Is your unwillingness to overlook a transgression really a covert attempt to bolster your own righteousness, to be God, who alone has the right to not forgive?

Does being wronged make you feel noble and worthy, as the decent person who was wrongly hurt?

If you are unwilling to try to bring the other person along with you are you saying that they really aren't worth it? Can you tell Jesus they aren't worth it? Why can't you take an offender with you to the throne of grace where we *all* find help in time of need?

Now you may protest, well I've overlooked, I just don't care to deal with that person! But does God treat you that way in the gospel? Or is it much better than that? Doesn't God proclaim in the gospel of Christ, "I forgive you, and now I adopt you! Now that I've forgiven you I've only just begun to open the floodgates of My blessings! Now that I've bought you as My own, by the blood of My Son, come share in all the riches that are His!" (Rom. 8:32)

Archibald Alexander, a Presbyterian theologian who served ten years as president of Hampden-Sydney College, said, "Increasing solicitude for the salvation of men, sorrow on account of their sinful and miserable condition, and a disposition tenderly to warn sinners of their danger, evince a growing state of piety.

It is also a strong evidence of growth in grace when you can bear injuries and provocations with meekness and when you can from the heart desire the temporal and eternal welfare of your bitterest enemies."

Here's the test to see if you're truly overlooking offenses:

Will you give that person the benefit of the doubt- attributing to them the best of motives?

Will you concretely promote their best- including your serving them?

Will you pray for them as you would want God to bless you?

Can you see them as someone sinned against and warped by the fall, desperately needing your pity and compassion?

Will you pay the price for their sin (all sin involves a debt) with the riches lavished upon you in Christ? Can you release them from the debt? If I break your shovel I justly owe you a new Shovel. If you forgive me, you absorb the cost.

That's your greatest glory, because when you overlook another's offense, never are you more like Christ!

Because of the gospel, we can come freely to Christ with our frail, resentful hearts. We can tell Jesus we want, sadly, to punish the other person for what they did to us. We can hear Jesus say, "It's alright. I'll take care of you. Let me do the punishing in My time and in My way. I'll give you enough grace to absorb the cost of what's been inflicted upon you. Just as I will not hold against you what you inflicted on Me, don't you hold it against them." Therein is a tremendous freedom to end the rat race of proving your self worth and to adorn the glorious heart of Christ.