

**A Godly Instruction [on How to Treat Those Who Wrong Us], c. 1534  
(modernized version)**

*A Godly Instruction, Written by Sir Thomas More, Knight,  
While He Was a Prisoner in the Tower of London in 1534*

Bear no malice or evil will to any man living. For either the man is good or wicked. If he is good and I hate him, then I am wicked.

If he is wicked, either he will amend and die good and go to God, or live wickedly and die wickedly and go to the devil. And then let me remember that if he be saved, he will not fail (if I am saved too, as I trust to be) to love me very heartily, and I shall then in like manner love him.

And why should I now, then, hate one for this while who shall hereafter love me forevermore, and why should I be now, then, an enemy to him with whom I shall in time be coupled in eternal friendship? And on the other side, if he will continue to be wicked and be damned, then is there such outrageous eternal sorrow before him that I may well think myself a deadly cruel wretch if I would not now rather pity his pain than malign his person. If one would say that we may with good conscience wish an evil man harm lest he should do harm to other folk who are innocent and good, I will not now dispute upon that point, for that root has more branches to be well weighed and considered than I can now conveniently write (having no other pen than a coal). But truly will I give counsel to every good friend of mine that unless he be put in such a position as to punish a man in his charge by reason of his office, he should leave the desire of punishing to God and to such other folk who are so grounded in charity and so fast cleaved to God that no secretly malicious or cruel affection can creep in and undermine them under the cloak of a just and a virtuous zeal. But let us that are no better than men of a mean sort ever pray for such merciful amendment in other folk as our own conscience shows us that we have need of in ourselves.

From *The Sadness of Christ and Final Prayers and Instructions* (Scepter, 1993), pp. 142-143