

The Fruit of the Spirit (6): Kindness

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[0 : 00] Titus, from verse 1 to verse 11, Titus 3. Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

[1 : 39] Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful.

He is self-condemned. Amen, and may God bless these readings of his word. Amen, and may God bless these readings of his words.

It's either sours quicker than it pours, or isn't milk, but poison instead. Maybe it's because I've been involved with it for over 30 years, but regrettably, I'd have to say that in the church, unkind thoughts, words, and deeds aren't just common.

They are to be accepted. As Christians, we have grown up in a culture where criticism is more normal than kindness. It's easy to point to something or someone out there and talk of the unkindness of the world around us.

But before we judge the world for its unkindness, surely we must judge ourselves, our thoughts, our words, our deeds.

[3 : 27] And as we do so with honesty and with sincerity, we must hang our heads in shame and recognize that while others have been unkind to us, we have also been unkind to them, that the heart of human unkindness is the unkindness of the human heart.

Many of us may have wished that kindness was not one of the fruit of the Spirit, that we could replace it with something perhaps more respectable, like honesty, for example.

All too often we justify an unkind word by saying, well, at least I'm being honest. It's often been said that the favorite Sunday dinner enjoyed by free church people is roast preacher.

But kindness has earned its place among the fruit of the Spirit. It belongs there alongside faithfulness and peace. A love which is unkind is no love at all.

The Holy Spirit works kindness in us because fundamentally, He is kind. And as He works in us, He produces kind thoughts, kind words, kind actions.

[4 : 55] Well, before we enter into the sacred halls of divine kindness, let's stand aside for a moment. Let's get our definition straight. Being kind isn't the same as being nice, fluffy, and inoffensive, passive, unassertive, and having no personality at all.

As we shall see, no one was ever kinder than Jesus. But He was very far from the blandness of the nice. A more manly man you would never meet, but a kinder man you'd never meet.

I want us to understand the fruit of the Spirit in three directions. Kindness and patience, kindness and God, kindness and life.

Kindness, first of all, and patience. Kindness and patience. Certain virtues belong together in the thought world of the Bible.

Grace and mercy. Fear and trembling. Patience and kindness. In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle devotes a whole chapter to love, and he begins by saying, love is patient, love is kind.

[6 : 17] Patience and kindness are partners in virtue. They belong together in the life of the Christian just as surely as grace and mercy. They form perfect partners, complementing each other even as they express together the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

But in what way are these two virtues so closely linked together? 250 years ago, just over that now, the New England theologian pastor Jonathan Edwards delivered a series of lectures called Charity and Its Fruits where he expounded 1 Corinthians 13, charity being an old-fashioned word for love.

As I said, the first two virtues Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 13 are patience and kindness. Love is patient, love is kind. According to Edwards, patience bears with those who injure us.

Kindness responds to those who injure us with goodness. In other words, rather than repaying evil with evil, the kind Christian does not just put up with the evil, but he repays the evil he has been subjected to with good.

It's the mindset of Romans 12, 21, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. And so someone hurts us and our natural reaction is to hurt them back, to do the whole eye for an eye thing, to fight fire with fire.

[8 : 08] Patience bears with that person who has hurt us. kindness responds with goodness. They've gossiped about us. They've undermined our reputation.

We shall be patient. We shall refuse to do the same. Furthermore, we shall be kind and when we talk to them and about them, we shall speak of them with honor and respect.

To put it even more starkly, they forced us to carry a burden for one mile. We patiently carried it for one mile. We kindly bore it for one mile more.

You know, I'm so thankful for Jonathan Edwards' clarification of this vital connection between patience and kindness because it brings us back to the exact sayings of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5.

If someone strikes you in the right cheek, turn to him the left also. If someone wants to sue you, take your tunic, then give him your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

[9 : 19] So when struck on the right cheek, patience does not strike back. Kindness turns to him the other cheek. When sued for your tunic, patience does not resist.

Kindness, however, gives him your cloak also. When forced to go one mile, patience doesn't complain. Kindness goes two miles.

So can you begin to see the unbreakable link between kindness and goodness, kindness and patience rather? they both apply to the same person, perhaps even the same incident or situation.

Patience bears with the offense. Kindness responds to the offense with goodness. We can compare the kindness, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us, with the works of the sinful nature listed earlier in verse 20.

hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, and factions. All of these vices in Galatians 5.20 are caused first by a lack of patience and second by a lack of kindness.

[10 : 48] You don't like a decision that's been made by the leaders of a church. Rather than patiently bear with it, you cause division and it leads to anger, it leads to hatred.

Pandemonium ensues and all because we lacked patience and kindness. Now let me apply this truth to those of us who are seeking after the truth of the gospel because even though we are wise enough to know that followers of Jesus aren't really quite so good at being patient and kind, you recognize that a world filled with patience and kindness really would be a better place.

The thing is we cannot have the kindness Jesus showed without also having the Jesus who showed such kindness and the Holy Spirit who works that kindness in us.

If being patient with those who hurt us requires almost miraculous restraint, being kind to them requires a miracle greater than the dividing of the Red Sea. To be genuinely kind, you need Jesus and his Holy Spirit in you to work such miracles.

So pray for faith to believe in him. Kindness and patience. Second, kindness and God.

[12 : 20] God. Kindness and God. I've already hinted at this in my previous application, but I want us to remember something very important indeed.

We live in the world where people say to us, do as I say, but not as I do. So judges break the law. In the name of public service, politicians serve themselves and so on and so forth.

God is not like that. For what he says is what he does and what he does is what he says always. And so I guess it should go without saying, but when God commends to us the value of kindness, here in Galatians 5.22 and calls it a fruit of the spirit, including it between patience and goodness, it's because not only is God patient and good, but because first and foremost, he is kind.

We serve a God who is not merely one of a kind, but a God who is kind. The Holy Spirit who lives within us is kind by nature and therefore the expression of his presence in our lives is kindness.

kindness. Therefore, the ultimate reason why we as Christians are to be kind is because our heavenly Father is kind. In the first instance, God is kind to his enemies.

[13 : 57] He is kind to his enemies. In Luke 6.35, we read these words, he, that is God, is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. They may shake their fists at God.

They may mock him. They may even crucify his son, but he is kind to them nonetheless. He sends rain on dry ground. He makes the sun shine.

He makes their crops grow. He gives them families to love and homes in which to live. He gives them breath in their lungs, experiences of happiness, and he heals their diseases.

It is not deserved because they are not kind to him. They may wound his people. They may kill his son, but not only does God bear with them patiently, but he shows them the kindness of his heart.

God is kind. It is in his nature to do good to his enemies. In the second instance, the kindness of God leads to our salvation.

[15 : 05] salvation. The kindness of God leads to our salvation. In Romans 2, 4, we read these words, God's kindness leads you to repentance. And in Titus 3, 4, 5, we read these words together.

We read, but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. What do we see in Jesus dying upon the cross for our sins?

But the kindness of God. And what do we see when Jesus is crushing the serpent's head? We see the kindness of God. And what do we see when the Holy Spirit is drawing our hearts out to Jesus?

We see the kindness of God. Yes, we can use wonderfully technical words like justification and propitiation and atonement.

But ultimately behind it all is the kindness of God. He saved us. And he led us to repentance, not because we were better than anyone else, or because he saw a spark of potential within us he could not see in anyone else, but purely out of the treasure house of his kindness.

[16 : 26] Jesus. Many of us can look back to our pre-Christian days and we realize that far from deserving salvation, we deserved condemnation.

We were no different from anyone else. We didn't think much of God or about God. We lived for ourselves and for our own desires and ambitions.

But though we deserved wrath, he showed us kindness in its place. He sent people into our lives who told us about a loving shepherd who goes looking for his lost sheep.

A good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. A great shepherd who knows his sheep by name and feeds them with the richest of food. With cords of kindness, God drew us to himself, not because we deserved it, but because he is kind.

And then thirdly, the kindness of God is our constant experience as Christians. The kindness of God is our constant experience as Christians.

[17 : 45] In Psalm 31 verse 19, we read these wonderful words. How great is your goodness, literally kindness, how great is your kindness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men who take their refuge in you.

God has a treasure house of his kindness stored up for you. Every day is a new opportunity for you to experience a new aspect of God's kindness toward you.

He stored it up for you. Day after day, he affords you a new experience of his undeserved kindness.

As our father, he delights to express his kindness to us in acts of spontaneous goodness. It's never a question of us pressuring him, but of his being delighted to give to his beloved children.

If we will but open our eyes to see, every day gives us new opportunities to learn how kind, not how stingy and mean, our heavenly father is.

[19 : 07] It may be something as unexpected as a letter from a loved one, or a reading from the Bible, which speaks directly into our situation that day.

It may be something as innocent as the smile on the face of a child, or the fresh realization that someone loves you, but it's a kindness you did not deserve, and yet God gave it to you nonetheless.

a life with no kindness is hell on earth, a deadly prison where we receive only what we deserve and never any more.

The key to it's here, if only we will have eyes to see it. Daily our prayer needs to be, Lord, open my eyes, that I may see new kindnesses today.

The day will come when faith will be swallowed in sight. In heaven's glory we shall fully appreciate just how kind our Father is. So the kindness of God extends to his enemies.

[20 : 25] The kindness of God leads to our salvation. The kindness of God is our constant experience as Christians. Eventually, however, the kindness of God leads us to the cross on which Jesus died.

For there, the righteous died for the unrighteous. He who deserved only eternal life received eternal death.

He who deserved only eternal blessings received eternal pain, that we who caused him that pain may receive his eternal blessings.

as they drove the nails into his hands and his feet, he did not just bear the indignity, but he prayed for those who were murdering him.

Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing. And yes, perhaps the kindest thing we can do for those who harm us is to pray for them.

[21 : 29] because one thing is for sure, our kindness to them will never exceed Christ's kindness to us. Because in his hell, we have heaven.

In his punishment, we have peace. In his death, we have life. In his sacrifice, we have salvation. In his going down, we are lifted up. In his grace, we have glory. In his blood, we have beauty.

In his cuts, we have kindness. kindness. Shall any of us ever out kind him? Shall we ever be in such a situation as he carrying on his shoulders the weight of a world's sin and loving it still?

Perhaps there are some of us among us this evening who have heard the word being preached for decades, decades, but have not yet come to a living faith in Jesus for ourselves.

We perhaps call ourselves adherents because we wouldn't presume to take the next step and ourselves place our faith in Jesus. Think, my friend, of the shape of Christ's kindness to you, the shape of his goodness day by day, especially that gospel which remains open to you, even though for so many years you have not walked through that door.

[23 : 04] Christ's invitation to you is as genuine today as it ever has been, and his love for you burns just as hot as it did the day you were first born. spurn. It's time to stop spurning his kindness.

It's time to accept that what he did on the cross, he did for you. Kindness and patience, kindness and God, and then lastly, kindness and life.

Kindness and life. Well, never was there a kinder man in the world than Jesus. So if we want to get down deep and we want to be practical about what it means to show kindness in our lives, there's no better place to survey kindness in the life of Jesus.

Again, let me reiterate, kindness is not a concept somewhat akin to fluffiness. It is responding to provocation and suffering with goodness.

It is not merely tolerating and bearing it patiently, but positively responding with goodness. And as I said before, if it takes miraculous power for us to be patient, it takes a power even greater than that required to divide the Red Sea to make us kind.

[24 : 27] And yet the Holy Spirit promises that he shall produce kindness within us. The Jesus we model ourselves on, is kind. And the Father who loves us and by his grace has saved us, is kind.

And so as we close, let me survey the kindness of Jesus under two headings. First, it was real kindness, and secondly, it was extravagant kindness.

kindness. Now, this is extremely challenging for us, but unlike many sermons you will hear from me, I can truly guarantee you that at some point this week, you will be treated harshly by someone.

And therefore, you will have the opportunity, as you depend upon the grace of Christ, to put this teaching about Christ's kindness into action, and respond to that harsh treatment you have received, not with violence or bitterness, but with kindness and goodness.

First of all, then, the kindness of Jesus was real. It was real. You know, Mark 10, 21, is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible.

[25 : 53] Let me explain the context. A rich, young, powerful man has come to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. This young man, so filled with this world's joie de vivre, was also filled with this world's pride.

And Jesus knew that this young man had no intention of doing what he was going to be asked to, namely to give up all his possessions and follow Jesus. Jesus knew it only too well.

And yet in Mark 10, 21, we read these words, we read, Jesus looked at him and loved him. He looked at him and loved him.

You know, Mark is writing under Peter's influence, and it's obvious that Peter remembers everything about this incident, even down to the expression in Jesus' eyes when this young man is making ready to reject him.

Peter remembered that Jesus looked at that rich young man, and he remembers that the look in Jesus' eyes was one of great love. Yes, even though this young man was going to reject Jesus, and this young man was going to walk away, Jesus' kindness to him was not an insincere act.

[27 : 15] It was genuine. You will be tested on this very point this week, I can assure you. What may seem to others to be an innocent comment directed toward you is, in fact, less than charitable.

The person who said it knows what he said. He didn't mean anything good by it. Perhaps he said it to make you look small and himself look big.

You look into his eyes, and in that instant he knows you know. But how shall you respond to that hurtful comment he made?

What look shall he see in your eyes? Yes, it may be hurt. You may be deeply hurt by his comment. It may be betrayal. It may be humiliation.

But let your look be a look of love toward him. Be like the Christ you follow, and let your kindness be real. But then also, the kindness of Jesus was extravagant.

[28 : 29] Extravagant. You know that Jesus often leaves me amazed, but there are a few more amazing episodes in his life than when attacked by a mob intent on arresting him, and Peter having taken his sword and chopped off the right ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus tenderly reaches out to that man and heals his ear.

So this man, this high priest's servant, has come to this place with nothing but hatred for Jesus. He is fully aware of what has been planned out for Jesus, namely execution by the cross.

And yet, with such extravagant kindness, Jesus does not merely bear with the indignity of being arrested, but goes the extra mile and heals the maimed ear of his enemy.

Isn't this amazing? That a man would not merely bear with the arrest, but move forward in loving kindness to those who hate him.

I wonder how that made the high priest's servant feel. We're not told in scripture, but I'm sure it would have had a very deep impact upon him. But then I guess if you slapped a man on his right cheek, and he, rather than just putting up with it, turned to his left cheek also, you'd be pretty amazed.

[29 : 59] Or if you forced a man to carry a heavy burden one mile before you, and rather than just doing it without complaining, he carried it for two, you'd also be pretty blown away.

You see, as Christians, our kindness is to be real and extravagant. Think of how this can work in your situation. Go back to that situation where someone has made a hurtful comment to you or about you.

How can you express the kindness of God toward him, both in reality and in extravagance? Perhaps turning and looking him in the eye with love?

Perhaps also by saying to him something respectful and honoring. But then I wanted to ask, how is it possible for us as human beings who naturally want to respond to evil with evil and fight fire with fire, not just to be patient to those who hurt us, but to be kind?

How is it possible? Well, this is the miracle of faith. Not just reminding ourselves daily of the gospel in which the kindness of God has been poured out over us in Christ Jesus.

[31 : 29] Not just in daily trying to be like Jesus in the reality and extravagance of his kindness. Been cooperating with the mighty Holy Spirit of God who is within us, who is on our side, whose strength is available to us, and who always listens and answers our prayers for help.

Unlike many sermons you will hear from me, I can positively guarantee that at some point this week you will be treated harshly and therefore you will have the opportunity that you depend upon the grace of Christ and remember the sermon this evening to put this teaching about kindness into practice.

respond not with violence or bitterness but with love, kindness, and goodness. Brothers and sisters in Christ, in view of God's kindness to us, let us be kind.

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