

Not Too Much To Bear – Part 6: Kindness
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July 21, 2019

Kindness by Chris Tomlin

Open up the skies of mercy
And rain down the cleansing flood
Healing waters rise around us
Hear our cries lord let 'em rise
Open up the skies of mercy
And rain down the cleansing flood
Healing waters rise around us
Hear our cries Lord let 'em rise

It's your kindness Lord
That leads us to repentance
Your favor Lord, is our desire
It's your beauty Lord
That makes us stand in silence
Your love, Your love is better than life

We can feel Your mercy falling
You are turnin our hearts back again
Hear our praises rise to heaven
Draw us near Lord. Meet us here

It's your kindness Lord
That leads us to repentance
Your favor Lord, is our desire
It's your beauty Lord
That makes us stand in silence
Your love. Your love

It's your kindness Lord
That leads us to repentance
Your favor Lord, is our desire
It's your beauty Lord
That makes us stand in silence
Your love, Your love is better than life

Your love

Open up the skies of mercy
And rain down the cleansing flood
Healing waters rise around us
Hear our cries Lord let 'em rise

Today, we continue in part 6 of the summer sermon series, “*Not too Much to Bear – Bearing the Character of Christ*” entitled Kindness. If you thought patience in the fruit of the Spirit was tough to swallow, then kindness is a tender one, and Paul puts kindness directly right after patience. It’s most likely that he saw both of them as essential qualities of love, which is the first fruit of the Spirit. “*Love is patient love is kind*” (1 Cor. 13:4). Hopefully, today, we will be able to see what kindness meant to Jesus when he said that we should do for others whatever we wish others would do for us. But first, let’s take a moment and unite together in prayer.

Heavenly Father, and Spirit Son, help us to walk patiently in the fruit of the Spirit, leading us directly into kindness and love for one another and the world around us. Teach us Jesus, to be like you in all our ways. Teach us to follow in your humble footsteps and guide us to the place you want us to be. Mold us and shape us into the brilliant beings we were always destined to become. Amen

Let’s read together from Galatians 5:22-26. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking, and envying each other.*”

Kindness is often linked with generosity or in a biblical sense, generously providing for another person’s benefit. Maybe we can simplify kindness by saying that kindness is not a term describing the action, but a characteristic that defines people – people who make a habit of blessing and benefiting others because that is their character. Often when we read the Old Testament, we have difficulty in associating kindness with God, but if we were to look a bit closer, the praise of God in the Old Testament describes his faithful love.

I often think about the missionaries across the regions of the world that the church supports, collecting money for building projects, supporting financial needs to spread the good news or to help with mission projects that require a giving of one’s time to help others in a time of need. Kindness is an essential component. There are a lot of unkind people in this world. Unkindness (among Christians) is what makes people outside of the church decide not to become Christians. When we want to quote verses, they are looking for kindness. In listening to a recent podcast by Pastor Jim Cymbala, he told a story of his younger days attending prep school preparing him to enter the Naval Academy. He and his roommate would stay up late at night talking about everything, and one night, Jim got onto the topic about God. As they continued in conversation, his roommate began mocking him about his belief in God. One word led to another, and then all of a sudden, a word triggered something. Sound familiar? That’s how things usually go.

Anyhow, they began yelling at each other in the middle of the night and curse words followed from the other side of the room in the direction of Jim. Taking from the desk, Jim’s mothers’ favorite Bible given to him, the roommate threw it across the room. The cover came off, and all of the papers tucked inside went flying. Well, in a real act of kindness, Jim jumped down from the top bunk, went over and beat the living daylights out of him until his hands bled. As Jim was telling the story, he joked, I had so much adrenaline and “I was beating the daylights out of him in the name of the Lord in human form.”

As the story goes on, the remainder of the time spent in school, Jim never once mentioned the Lord to his roommate again, because once you become mean and unkind to somebody, it’s hard to tell them about Jesus. Would you say that’s true? A lot of bitterness toward Christians is because we can become so unkind in the interruptions of life.

If we turn back to the Old Testament history of Israel and the reign of King Solomon in Jerusalem, we read that King Solomon dies, and his son Rehoboam became king in his place. The end of the story in 1 Kings 11 unfolds with Solomon pictured as a builder of extravagant temples and robbing people blind with taxes that the people rebelled for his unfaithfulness to God. After

the death of Solomon, chapter 12 tells us that Solomon's son Rehoboam went to Shechem to make him king, the elders summoned him, Jeroboam from Egypt, and the whole assembly of Israel came to speak with him.

The entire assembly of Israel told him, your father made our yoke difficult, lighten up, and we will serve you. Rehoboam told the people to go home for three days and return to me, so they left. Rehoboam then turned to the wiser elders for advice on how to run the kingdom. How do you advise me to respond to these people, and they told him. *"Your father made our yoke difficult. Today, if you will be a servant to these people and serve them, and if you respond to them by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever"* (1 Kings 12:7).

Well, the young Rehoboam rejected their wisdom telling the elders. If you think my father was tough beating you with a whip, I'm going to discipline you with a scorpion. Later what happened is that the kingdom of Israel became divided, sending 10 of the 12 tribes with Jeroboam to the north called Israel in the Old Testament. The kingdom of Judah became established with the favor of Jerusalem as their capital, and for the rest of the Old Testament, the nation became divided until they came back to rebuild the Temple.

A lot of people do not have friends because nobody wants to be with them. It goes for Christians too. Some people talk so unkindly, act so unkindly, and we have all been guilty at one time or another of being unkind. The hardest thing for God to do is to make somebody kind. When was the last time someone gave you a kind word, not a critical word that you'll-never amount-to-anything word, but a building up encouraging word? Maybe even better yet, when is the last time we the church gave anyone a kind word? Most of the time, we do not realize that there are a lot of people going through a season of anxiety. If you watch the news with any regularity, you can feel the negativity and stress. Hear these words taken from the book of Proverbs and Message Bible.

"When you're kind to others, you help yourself; when you're cruel to others, you hurt yourself" (Prov. 11:17, MSG). The Lord wants to use us as people who give kind words. In our daily life, and all of the people around us, think of all the kind words versus all the negative words. Do we look at the glass as half empty or half full?

Let's take a look into another Old Testament story, this time about exceptional kindness in the book of Ruth. In a shortened version, and as the story unfolds, God is a divine player in the story as He answers prayer for Ruth. Ruth is a foreigner from Moab, and she shows a selfless, sacrificial kindness to her widowed mother-in-law Naomi, refusing to go home and leave Naomi alone after the death of her husband, Elimelech.

In her sense of loyalty, commitment, and conversion to the God of Israel, Ruth stays by Naomi's side. Boaz enters the scene and meets Ruth gleaning in the field, commending her for all she has done since the death of Naomi's husband. Later weirdly and surprisingly, Ruth lies down beside the sleeping Boaz in the middle of the night, and when awakened, Ruth asks him to marry her. Instead of saying to her, "what are you doing?" Boaz blesses her! Why? Because he believes Ruth was acting in kindness to Naomi and her deceased husband so that if she could have a son with Boaz, that son would carry on with the family name and property of Elimelech. Boaz and Ruth end up modeling the kindness of God because this is how God behaves, showing loving kindness to someone in dire need.

There are multitudes of examples to the kindness of Jesus. Jesus was not always 'nice', for he gave harsh words to the religious leaders and hypocrites. But to the poor and marginalized who were pushed aside, Jesus broke down the barriers of social taboos to show kindness, eating and drinking with people that were despised. We should remind ourselves of how Christ lives in us and how we should behave toward others around us, even strangers that challenge exercising kindness in moments of stress.

The most important people that stand out in your lives and mine are the ones whom we can remember as being kind. So the Bible has a lot to do with the fact that God is kind and that he tells his people to be kind. *"Love is patient, and love is kind"* (1 Corinthians 13). We can recognize when someone is under control of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, for there is love, joy, peace, and kindness. When God is controlling us, we are kind and positive. When the power of the flesh, or the devil, or the world is controlling you, you are never kind. Let's take that further.

It is a sin to despise one's neighbor but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy. Was Jesus ever caught being unkind to anyone? We need to remember that kindness is part of the fruit of the Spirit because it comes from being filled with God's Spirit. But kindness requires cultivation. It has to become a habit that builds into our character. We should strive to do what is right for each other and everyone else; be kind. Brothers and sisters, there will be no evangelism in this country until we are baptized in kindness because people do not want to hear our testimony without seeing first if we are kind.

So as we wrap things up, kindness comes in many forms. A pleasant word, caring smile, but most of all; being willing to do something, choosing instead to take action even though it might cause inconvenience. As the pictures of mission week streamed across the church Facebook page, I could only think of the kindness given by those choosing to do something for others out of the kindness of the heart. I am confident many others would have loved to lend a helping hand, but in wholehearted belief, the prayers celebrating the character of God raining in the riches of his kindness were carried in many hearts as the week went on.

The Apostle Paul understood that the kindness of God was and is available to everyone, grieving those who fail in understanding that God's intent of patient kindness is meant to lead us to the cleansing flood of repentance and salvation (Rom. 2:4).

As you leave here today, understand one thing, that the supreme and ultimate kindness of God was the gift of His own Son Jesus Christ. Healin' waters rise around us and hear our cries Lord, Let em rise. Amen.