

Don't Take it for Granted

Romans 2:4

Introduction

Illus: Several of us men in the church enjoy arguing over who which is the best truck brand to own. After this week the argument is over; it's Ford. I rode to Florida with two brothers in our church who have a farm there. I won't mention any names but boy did I realize that I was taking my Ford truck for granted. After riding in that McKenzie Farms Dodge, I came home and gave my F150 a hug. I realized how much I took for granted the quiet and smooth ride of my Ford.

Another thing I realized I took for granted was sleep. Those nutty farm boys believe in hitting the road early. I had to get up at 3:00 AM to meet them at the barn at 4:00 AM. And no, I couldn't sleep on the way for two reasons: 1) I was in a dodge and 2) One of the brothers is notorious for sleeping in the back seat and stinking up the cab, so I had to stay awake to keep him awake. So I learned that I take sleep for granted as well.

Seriously though, we all go through life taking things for granted. For years I took my eyesight and hearing for granted; never bothering to protect them. Today I require devices to offset the degradation and wonder just how bad they will get as I get older.

We take the love of our parents for granted. Our parents strive to provide for us and raise us up in the right way. All the while we overlook the sacrifices they make for us. It is hard work being a good parent. When we are young, all of us take our parents love for granted. But when we get older and have children of our own, we understand.

Likewise, many people go through life taking God's love for granted. But one day they will understand what a terrible mistake it is to take for granted his love and mercy.

Scripture - Romans 2:3-4

³ So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:3-4 NIV

Introduction

This week as I reflected on God's kindness in my life and the life of my family members, I was deeply humbled. As I began to list in my mind all of the things God has done for me, I became consumed with appreciation and humility. God has abundantly poured out His kindness in my life. All Undeserved!

Verse 3 of our text reminds us that we are all accountable for our sins. Paul was speaking specifically to the Jews who considered themselves above the condemnation of God.

God judges all men in truth. Nothing is hidden from God. There are sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. There are prodigal sons who defy God and set out to satisfy their flesh. There are also elder brothers of the prodigal son who fail to understand the purpose behind the father's love and mercy.

In condemning the Gentiles, the Jews were actually condemning themselves. When we judge others and condemn them for their sins, we are condemning ourselves for we all sin.

As the old saying goes, "When you point your finger at someone else, you have three pointing back at you."

Our text speaks of the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience and warns us about showing contempt for them.

Contempt - "to show dishonor, disobedience or disrespect."

Some people live a lifetime rejecting God's love and refuse to live for God. I can only conclude that some people simply do not understand or appreciate the depth of God's love and kindness.

The Bible teaches that when we do understand God's love, it affects us so that we become different. We become a changed person. We now want to glorify him and live for him. Our desires change and our attitude changes. Everything changes as we desire to walk with God, worship God and bring honor to him with our lives.

When one fully understands and experiences God's loving kindness, one's most important goal in life is to glorify God.

Content

1. God's Kindness Reflects His Amazing Love

God's kindness is a reflection of His amazing love for us.

Illus: Someone asked a famous theologian what was the most profound thing he had gleaned from God's word? His response was, "Jesus loves me this I know."

Illus: I read a story about a family whose twenty year old son had become rebellious. He spent his nights wasting away with drinking and partying. He constantly spurned his parents love.

One night while drunk, he appeared at his parent's home, stumbled through the door and passed out on their floor.

As the father was about to wake him and kick him out, the mother gently knelt down beside him. She placed his head in her lap and caressed his hair. She looked at the father and said, "Give me a moment, he's still my son and I love him."

This reminds me of the awesome kindness and love of God towards you and me. God loves us so intensely that He repeatedly tolerates your rebellion even though it breaks His heart.

The Greek word translated kindness is "chrestotetos". It literally means, "*benevolence in action.*" God's kindness is not that of some sugar daddy taking care of his children. It is a kindness of mercy and grace. God's kindness is a loving tolerance.

The only earthly example that even comes close is the love and kindness of a parent for their child. Even when the child does not deserve it, parents love continues to reach out.

God's kindness is reflected in his blessings upon you. His kindness is manifest in the forgiveness of sin and the washing away of sin as far as the east is from the west.

What about the mistakes you have made? What about the times you did not trust Him and decided to handle things on your own? What about the times you denied Him because you were too concerned about what others might think?

God's kindness endures because He loves us so much.

⁴⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
John 3:16 NIV

2. God's Kindness Should Not Be Taken For Granted

God's kindness should not be taken for granted. Too often, we take His kindness for granted. We assume that God will just wait forever.

Illus: Like a hand tool, many people put God on a shelf with the intention of retrieving Him only when needed. Many times we treat God like a dentist. We go to him only when we have to.

For many people today, God is just a small part of their life. He is someone they consider valuable to have around when they need to turn to Him. Much of the time they expect God to just be there for them.

It does not work that way with God. Yes, God is patient and kind, but there is a purpose in His kindness. And, eventually, He will leave a person to their own doing.

Verse 4 of our text is a question each of us should ask ourselves.
⁴*Do you show contempt (think lightly NAS) for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Illus: We have all watched enough TV to see Matlock or other courtroom drama programs. When the attorney or a witness gets out of line, the judge slams down the gavel and shouts, "One more remark like that and I will hold you in contempt."

To take God's kindness and patience for granted is to show contempt (disrespect & dishonor) for who He is.

Reading Romans 1, we see a catalog of sins that are displeasing to God. You might reason that you are not guilty of these sins or that in they are no longer a sin because they are accepted in society.

Paul appeals to our conscience in verse 3; *...Do you think you will escape God's judgment?" In other words; "Do you really think there will not be a day of reckoning?"*

Honestly, I don't know what penalty is worse; standing before God and receiving judgment for rejecting God. Or, will it be the deep sorrow of knowing you spent your entire life wrongfully rejecting a personal relationship with the Heavenly Father?

We must not take the kindness of God for granted.

3. God's Kindness Has Purpose

God's kindness is for a purpose.

This message is a call to non-believers to accept the love and grace of God through Christ on the cross. It is an invitation to receive His gift of grace. However, this message is also a message to believers. It is a call to believers to recognize that Jesus Christ should be the Lord of your life.

All of God's kindness, all of His patience, all of His tolerance is for a purpose. The purpose is to bring you to repentance and bring you to a point where He is Lord of our life.

Repentance is not a one time deal. Just because we are saved, this does not mean we never need to repent again.

- Some people do not profess to be a Christian and just keep rejecting God's grace. His kindness calls you to repentance.
- Some people profess to be Christians but are mean spirited. His kindness calls you to repentance.
- Some people profess to be Christians but are dishonest and untrustworthy. His kindness calls you to repentance.
- Many Some people profess to be Christians but are unfaithful and unreliable. His kindness calls you to repentance.
- Some people profess to be Christians but never serve God, rarely attend worship and study God's word. His kindness calls you to repentance.

We all sin and we need to recognize God's kindness and forgiveness. God's love calls us to repentance. God calls us to a new way of life.

If you truly know Christ, you will experience newness of life.

"⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Romans 6:4 NIV

Early in this message, I stated, when one fully understands and experiences the loving kindness of God, one's most important goal in life is to glorify God. Does that describe you?

Conclusion

When a person works an 8-hour day, they receive a fair day's pay. When a person competes with an opponent and wins, they receive a prize or trophy.

But when a person is incapable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives them all anyway, that is a good picture of God's unmerited kindness. This is what we mean when we speak of the grace of God!

The more you understand God's kindness and grace, the more you will be humbled. God's calls us to a personal relationship with Him by calling us to receive His grace.

Illus: One of my favorite college professors did something remarkable in a class on the gospels. At the end of the course, he distributed a test and cautioned us to read through the entire test before beginning.

As we began to read the test, you could hear groans coming from across the room. The test was unbelievably difficult. There were numerous questions about dates and quotes. This test was extremely difficult and everyone immediately knew they had not studied nearly enough.

On the last page, was a note that read, "You have a choice. You can either complete this exam as given or sign your name at the bottom and in so doing receive an A."

We were stunned. "Was he serious? Just sign it and get an A?" Slowly, the point dawned on us, and one by one we turned in our tests and quietly walked out of the room.

We had just been taught the lesson of the entire New Testament - Grace.