

God's Kindness

Romans 2:4

Introduction

Illus: I was once talking with a good friend who had buried his mother the previous week. He was struggling with the grief and he said something I have never forgotten.

My friend said, "When I was growing up and even as a young adult, I always knew I took my mother for granted. But, it wasn't until recently that I realized she knew that all along."

Parents and especially Mothers are just that way. They keep giving and giving all the while in hopes that children will learn. It is when we finally "get it" that we see a parent's amazing love and respond with love in return.

In my younger days I used to think about the Bible indicating that man is created in the likeness of God. I would think, "yeh right."

But as I grow older I have come to realize that when we look closely at the unselfish moments and acts of unrewarded kindness, it is then that we see the likeness of God in men and women. There are those remarkable things that we do, sometimes instinctively that cause us to display the attributes of our Creator.

A Parent's relentless kindness and love is one such example. Such patience and enduring love is a mirror image of God's kindness and love for His children.

Scripture – Romans 2:4

⁴ Or 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? Romans 2:4 NIV

Prayer

Content

I have first hand experience with God's kindness. This week as I reflected on God's kindness in my life and the life of my family members, I was humbled to tears.

As I began to list in my mind all of the things God has done for me, I became swamped with appreciation and humility. God has abundantly poured out His kindness in my life. All Undeserved!

1. God's Kindness Reflects His Love

God's kindness is a reflection of His enormous 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 spurred 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 want to hold him."

This reminds me of the awesome kindness and love of God towards you and me. He loves us so intensely that He repeatedly tolerates our sin 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.

Instead, 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.

God's kindness is reflected in more ways than we can imagine. Take a moment and think about how God has shown kindness in your life.

Most likely, you thought about his blessings upon you. You may think about the many times you have sinned and his forgiveness has washed away that sin.

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

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

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

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.

Like a hand tool, many people put God on a shelf with the intention of retrieving Him when they need Him.

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

Today’s text is a question and a sarcastic question at that.

⁴Do 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 some of the other courtroom drama programs. When the attorney or a witness gets out of line, the judge slams down the gavel and shouts, “Mr. Matlock! That is enough of that. 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 for who He is. Taking God’s kindness for granted is being in contempt of His kindness.

You may say, “What is the rush? Why is it so important that I not take His kindness and tolerance for granted?”

Reading Romans 1, we see a catalog of sins that are displeasing to God. Some might reason that they are not guilty of these sins or that in their life these are not sin because of the good they do.

Paul appeals to our conscience in verse 3; “Do you really imagine... that you will escape the condemnation of God? Do you really think there will not be a day of sentencing?”

Honestly, I don’t know what penalty is worse. Will it be the penalty of standing before God and receiving judgment for sin and 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.

You are perhaps thinking this message is for non-Christians. You are thinking it is a call for them to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal savior.

Well you are correct. However, it is also a message to believers. It is a call to believers to recognize that Jesus Christ should be the Lord of our lives.

All of God’s kindness, all of His patience, all of His tolerance is for a purpose. The purpose is to bring us to repentance.

The word repentance involves much more than just turning away from a former practice of sin. It involves a new attitude, a new perspective and a new life.

Repentance is not a one time deal. Just because we are saved, this does not mean we never need to repent again. I have known some Christians who were meaner than snakes. I know too many Christians who are unfaithful, unreliable and some untrustworthy. These are usually people who need to repent.

We all sin and we need to recognize God’s kindness and forgiveness. It calls us to repent.

God’s kindness and patience is not because He is indifferent to our sin. Far from it! By His divine goodness, he wants to lead us to repentance and a new way of life.

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. When a person gives of their time for noble service, they receive an award.

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.

Some people did not read all the way through and plowed forward taking the test until they got to the end and saw the grace line giving them an A.

Others became angry early on at the difficulty and stormed out of the room without ever getting to the grace line.

One fellow refused to accept the undeserved A and insisted on taking the test for a grade. He made a C but could have an A.

Some people give-up and never experience God's gift of grace in their lives. Still others reject it and insist on plowing through life and eternity on their own when they could have had an A in life.

God's grace may seem unbelievable, but if we accept it we discover that it is free, undeserved and everything to us.

Illus: When Elizabeth married the famous poet Robert Browning, her parents were so upset they disowned her. She and her husband settled far from home in Florence, Italy. Elizabeth loved her mother and father and did everything she could to be reconciled with them. Several times a month she wrote expressive, loving letters. After 10 years without any response, finally, a package came from her parents. It was a happy moment for Elizabeth as she opened it. But inside she found all of the letters she had sent- unopened. Like her husband, Elizabeth was a poet and her letters of reconciliation were eloquent. They have been called "some of the most beautiful and expressive in all English literature." But her parents never read them. Jesus Christ, like Elizabeth, went to extreme measures in a reconciliation attempt. He died so sinful men could be reconciled to God. It breaks his heart that many refuse to even read the letter of Calvary's love.