

The Fruit of the Spirit - Kindness

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[0 : 0 0] Well for a few moments I'd like us to turn back, well turn to Galatians chapter 5 as I said when we were reading we are in the middle of a study on the fruit of the Spirit and we can read again at Galatians 5 verse 22 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such things there is no law. We've been recently working our way through these different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit and today we're going to focus on kindness. Now throughout this study we've been emphasising the fact that the fruit of the Spirit outlines both the effect and the evidence of having God the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart. As a Christian

God himself dwells in your heart by his Spirit and that has an effect on our lives shaping the way we live, shaping what we do and it gives outward evidence to those who see us.

That's exactly what fruit is. It comes from a tree because of what that tree is on the inside and it's the evidence to the world of the very nature of that tree. So the fruit of the Spirit should characterise every Christian and that means that every one of us should be characterised by kindness. Now coming to kindness raises an interesting question because kindness and the element mentioned afterwards goodness are both very similar terms and although they're very simple and familiar terms they're quite hard to define. What exactly does Paul mean by kindness and goodness and is there any difference between the two? Because just like in English in Greek these two terms are very very similar. If I said oh somebody was good to me or I said somebody was kind to me in many ways I'd be meaning exactly the same thing and in Greek it's the same issue as there. The two words have a lot of overlap.

Both words can mean good, generous, kind, honest, benevolent, all that sort of thing. So when we come to this point we have to sort of ask the question what exactly is Paul meaning here? Do kindness and goodness mean the same thing or if there's a difference what is it?

Why does Paul include both of these? What do you do when you come to a word in the Bible and you think well I'm not exactly sure what Paul means by this? What's the best thing to do in that situation? Well one of the best things to do in that situation is to look at where else Paul has used that word and that's a very very helpful way of trying to gather information in terms of how Paul is using that word. You basically would call it a word study. You look at where this word appears elsewhere in the New Testament. So let's do that with kindness and we're going to put up about six verses where this word appears. I'll just read through them first and then we'll make a couple of points. This word appears in Romans 2, 3 to 4. Do you suppose oh man you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. Now just to point out there I've only underlined one of the words kindness because although it's identical in English the two words in Greek although they're very similar but actually slightly different. So it's the first word, the first kindness there that Paul is, that's the exact word although the second kindness is very very similar so it is meaning the same thing but I didn't want to underline it because it wasn't exactly the same word. Romans 3, 12. All have turned aside together they've become worthless. No one does good. That's the word. That's the same word there.

[4 : 23] Not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to the sea and so on. Romans 2, 11, 22. Note then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity towards those who have fallen but God's kindness to you provided you continue in his kindness otherwise you too will be cut off. Okay let's keep going into Ephesians 2. But God being rich in mercy, this is the verse we read at the very beginning, God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our testresses made us alive together with Christ by grace you've been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Colossians 3, 12. Put on the enus God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, etc. And lastly Titus 3 which we read, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us. I must apologize I made a mistake there it's the word goodness that I should have underlined there that's the same word goodness that's been translated in that word I put the underline in the wrong place so my apologies for that.

So that's where Paul uses the word. What do all these verses have in common? Well if you look at these verses I think we can safely say that the word kindness is being used in reference to others and this word can in fact be translated as the word useful it's the idea that our kindness is something that benefits others. Now if you do the same thing with the word goodness you discover that it's emphasizing something else but you'll have to wait until next time to find out what that is. But in terms of kindness I think the emphasis that this word study brings out is the fact that Paul is talking about how we act towards other people and so the indwelling of the presence of God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit should make us kind towards other people. And so I want us just to explore what we can learn from that today but as we do that the first and the best question to always ask is what does this teach us about God because in terms of shaping our own lives we have to base that on theology what we learn about God and about how he's dealt with us will then be the foundation on which our own conduct can be built upon. And the great truth that's been highlighted in these verses is that God is kind. Now as we've just said kindness is an activity in reference to other people so when we say that God is kind we are highlighting the fact that God is kind to us. God is kind to us. And that applies in so many ways. Every day we wake up to a thousand blessings. And that's why a simple thing like saying grace at mealtimes is so important because there you are thanking God for being so kind. And whether it's our clothing, our heating, our shelter, our warmth, our petrol, our clean water, our sanitation, whatever it is these things are an amazing blessing from God and we have so so much to be thankful for. But all of that's true. But what I want us to focus on is the fact that God is kind to us in terms of his salvation. The daily blessings we have are wonderful but at the pinnacle of God's goodness to us at the pinnacle of his kindness is the fact that he has worked for our salvation. Now have you ever thought of that? That at the heart of the Gospel is the fact that God just wants to be immeasurably kind to you. That's what lies at the heart of the Gospel. And at the heart of our salvation is God's kindness and we can highlight three key things as we study this today. And as we go we're trying to learn about God and what he's done for us and we're trying to apply that to our lives in practical terms. Three key things. The first is this. God has shown us kindness in what he hasn't done. God's shown us kindness in what he has not done.

That's the emphasis of Romans 2 which we read a moment ago. Do you suppose a man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? This is a fascinating verse. Romans 2 comes as part of a bigger section that runs from Romans 1-18 through to chapter 3 verse 20 that basically highlights the undeniable guilt and sinfulness of humanity. You read that section and Paul is basically saying we are all sinners. We are all accountable to God. No one has an excuse. And it's summed up by the words of Romans 3-10. None is righteous. No, not one. And so humanity has no excuse and God has every reason to judge us. As Paul says at Romans 2-1, therefore you have no excuse,

O man, every one of you judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself because you the judge practice the very same things. Paul is emphasizing the fact that we know it that it's so true. We can look at so many other people and we can look at the world and we can say there's so much wrong with the world, so much wrong with people. People are sinners. And yet Paul is reminding us yes, and so are you, and so am I. And that verse is so true because I look at myself and I in my life, I've judged people for gossiping. I've judged people for being short tempered, for failing to do the things that they should have done, for being selfish. And yet I'm guilty of all of those things myself. And if I compare myself to God's holy law, to his standard of righteousness, then I do not come remotely close to matching up. And that means that God has a right to judge. And it means that God has a reason to judge. We are sinners. He is judge. It's his law. It's his standards. He's in control. He has the right to judge us. And yet Paul is reminding us of a glorious word. And it's a word that we should hold on to and that we should know very well. The word forbearance. In his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. Now what does that mean? Well it's reminding us that although God has a reason to judge and a right to judge, our sin has not led to immediate and permanent condemnation. Instead, God has waited. God has not yet done what he had every right to do. And in doing that, he is showing us his extraordinary kindness. It's in what he has not done. And the clearest illustration of that is Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were given a warning. They were given very specific instructions and they were told not to do something and they did it. And there at that moment, God had the right to judge them and to break off all relations with them. They could have been condemned permanently. And yet if you read

Genesis 3 in the aftermath of the fall, God gives them hope. God provides clothing for them. God gives them a message of hope that through the seed of the woman, there will come one who's going to crush the head of the serpent. And the name Eve implies the fact that Adam and Eve recognize this promise. God said to Adam, through your wife is going to come one who is going to destroy this serpent who has brought death into the world. Through the seed of the woman, there is going to be life. And it says, Adam called his wife Eve, which means mother of the living, not mother of the dead, mother of the living, because God had given them hope. And the key point is this, that in relation to sinners like us, God shows forbearance. And every one of us should fall on our knees and thank God for his forbearance. Because when God could have condemned us, when God could have abandoned us, instead, he has waited and he's given us a chance. And Paul is telling us that that forbearance is an act of kindness. God is wanting to do us good by waiting. And Paul shows us and tells us that God's goal in that forbearance is to what? Well, it tells you

[14 : 33] Romans two verse four, what's God's goal in his kindness? What's it meant for? To lead you and me to repentance. And that's highlighting a glorious point that long before you ever thought about God, God was being kind to you because he was waiting and he was showing us forbearance. And this is a really important point because very often people can get annoyed with God for not doing things. Isn't that true? People get frustrated with God. Why haven't you done this? Why hasn't he done that? Why hasn't this happened? Why hasn't that happened? We get annoyed with God because he has not done stuff. And especially in terms of judging others, people will say that oh so and so has done this, so and so has done that. Why doesn't God do anything about it? And even the Samists used to say that Sam 94 verse three, oh Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? And you read the Psalms, often the Psalms complain to God because he's not doing stuff. He's not judging. But have I, I asked myself, have I ever stopped to thank God that he did not judge me the moment I sinned? Have I ever stopped to thank God for that? Have you? And the reason God did not condemn us instantly is because he wants to be kind to us. He wants to lead us to repentance. And that raises so many important points for us. For anyone who's not yet a Christian, for anyone who's seeking the Lord or uncertain about where they stand, it's so, so, so, so important that you remember this, that God is showing you

His kindness in His forbearance. The fact that you are alive today, the fact that you are here today under the Gospel is because God is kind to you, because God cares about you and all God wants from you is just to repent and to say Lord, I'm sorry for the mistakes I've made in my life and He wants to cleanse you and wash you and heal you.

That's God's desire for you and that's why He brings you here every week to tell you that He wants, He's waiting to heal you, to restore you and to cleanse you. God's forbearance is a demonstration of His kindness. But please, please, please listen to what Paul says at the beginning of verse four. He is saying, do not presume on God's kindness. Don't toy with God and think, yeah, okay, God, you'll be kind. I'll catch up with you in a few months or in a few years. I'll get you then. I'll come then. Paul says, do not presume. You have His kindness and His forbearance and His patience today. But don't presume that you have tomorrow. And the reason Paul is saying that is that that presumption is a presumption that leads people to hell. And don't let that be through your view. That's why we all have to make absolutely sure that God's kindness does indeed lead us to repentance. So for anyone seeking the Lord, God is calling, waiting. He's kind. He's not kind of waiting with a hammer at all. He's waiting with open arms. Always, always, always remember the Father and the prodigal son. That is how God is waiting for anyone who is seeking Him and coming to

Him. But it also has great application for us as Christians. And in particular, it reminds us all, every one of us, how we should act in situations of hurt and in situations of damaged relationships. Now we all know in life that that can come. In so many places, relationships are damaged. They are broken. That can be in families. It can be in our work. It can be in our communities. It can even be in church. And all too often, it is in churches. People fall out and people hurt each other. And how should we act in that situation? Well, God Himself is our example. And like Him, we must show kindness by forbearing and forgiving and always seeking for our relationships with others to be healed, regardless of who started it or who did what or whatever. Because we should surely in God's name be able to rise above that. And that's exactly why 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that love is patient and kind.

And it does not envy or boast. It's not arrogant or rude. It does not insist its own way on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful. You remember, we looked at this verse a few months ago, in fact, as part of this study, that word resentful, it's like keeping our record of wrongs, making an account of when somebody's hurt you and you hold against that person forevermore. And Paul is saying, love does not do that. God does not do that to us. We must not do that. And so all of this is a reminder that in terms of being kind in your life, some of the greatest acts of kindness that you can show is to not do things.

[20 : 29] To not criticise. To not remind people of their mistakes. To not talk about people when they've done something wrong. And to not rub salt into a wound. Remember, I used to often see that when I used to play football. Once upon a time when I was younger, I could play football more. I wish I had the time and the ability to do it now, but I don't. But I still like football. I used to enjoy playing football. One of the things I really found hard at football was, remember, we had a goalie and he was a really good goalie. But we had a game and he was having a terrible game. And he led in a really easy shot. He just blundered and made a mistake. And I remember some of my teammates just screaming at him because he had got this wrong. And nobody knows more than the guy himself that he's blundered and that he's made a mistake. And having a go at the guy didn't help him at all. And I remember going over to him and saying to him, don't worry. And he said, I just want to go home.

And he had to stand there at the rest of the match. And often you see that someone makes a mistake in a football match and the crowd or the manager or the teammates blast him. He doesn't need to be told he's made a mistake. It's obvious. In that situation, you need forbearance. And in thousands of other situations, that's true as well. So sometimes our greatest act of kindness are to not do things. And we should always test our actions against this question. Am I helping to lead this situation to repentance, to healing, to restoration?

That's a question we've got to remember every day. God shows his kindness in what he doesn't do. We must do the same. Secondly, God shows his kindness in what he has done. This is described to us wonderfully in Titus chapter three, which was the passage that we read. And I want to read again verses three to seven. This is talking about what God has done. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led us three slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Now, as I said in verse four, the word goodness is the same word as the word kindness. I underlined the wrong one earlier on. It's the word goodness there, the beginning of verse four, which is the same, but emphasise the fact that the two words are similar. But as I said, they're emphasising different things. God is being kind to us. And God has shown his kindness to us. His kindness has appeared to us. He has manifested to us. So what has God done? Well, verses five and six tell you, he has saved us through the appearing of our Savior and washed us through the washing of regeneration.

He's renewed us, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ. Now, these are very, very rich verses. And so we can only just scratch the surface for a moment together. But they remind us of the glorious truth of what God has done.

[24 : 15] He has shown himself to you and to me as a Savior. And that involves God in all his fullness as Trinity. These verses are glorious Trinitarian verses. The Father sends the Son, the Son Himself, Jesus has come as the Savior of Sinner. He is the one to rescue us. He is the one who dies in our place. Jesus Christ, our Savior. And all the benefits of that are applied to us by God, the Holy Spirit, so that we are washed, we are renewed, we are regenerated.

And as I said, we can only touch on these versions, but I want us to just look at them and to highlight three acts of kindness, three expressions of kindness that are described. First of all, it tells us God has acted according to his mercy. God has shown his mercy to us. You see that in the middle of verse five. God is so gloriously compassionate and gracious.

God in other words, looks at people like you and he says, I want to be kind to them. And that's why every need is met. We are stained by sin. Isn't that true? Sin is like a stain in our lives. And so he washes us. We are dead in sin. It leaves us as the walking dead with a death sentence hanging over us. So he regenerates us. That just means to make us alive again. And we are broken by sin and no one of us can deny that. And so he renews us. And we are healed. So God shows his kindness in his mercy. But secondly, how does he do that? Well, he does that in particular by providing a savior. All of that cleansing and renewal is through Jesus Christ, our savior, as verse six says. And so if you think about it, think about Jesus coming into the world, think about Jesus's mission. Every step of that is an act of kindness. God so loved the world. He gave his one and only son John 3 16. It's got kindness at the very middle of it. And then every step we think of God gave his son to be born in poverty. God gave his son to be tempted by the devil. Adam was tempted and he failed. Jesus was likewise given to be tempted. But he remains strong. God gave his son to be opposed. He gave him to be betrayed. He gave him to be abused. He gave him to be condemned. He gave him to be killed. He gave him who knew no sin to be sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And so he did not spare his own son.

But he gave him up for us all. And Jesus, Jesus willingly went down that path. So God provides a savior. So God shows his mercy. God provides a savior. Thirdly, the benefits of that are poured out upon us. I love that word, poor, because it speaks of abundance. And God himself, God the Holy Spirit, now dwells in you and in me as a Christian. And so not only does God provide a savior, not only does he cleanse us and renew us, but he actually makes you as a Christian his very own dwelling place. That's exactly why the fruit of the Spirit comes into our lives and into our experience, because God now dwells in us. And I really hope that you can see what this is saying. God's kindness is not simply a question of him pouring blessings on us, which he does. It's not simply him doing wonderful things for us, which he does. It's not simply him providing for us, which he does. But the culmination of God's kindness is that he is pouring himself into you. Have you ever thought of that? That by his Spirit and through his Son, God is pouring himself into you. And I wish I could describe that, but I know I can't. But thankfully Paul captures it in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 14. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now that's one of those phrases that is so easy to read and to not think about. What does God's kindness to you look like? It is a love that surpasses knowledge. It is an assurance that you will be strengthened through his Spirit, and it is a pledge that you will be filled with the fullness of God. What's God doing for you?

God himself, Father, Son and Spirit, has acted in all of his fullness so that we might be filled with all of his fullness. God wants to fill you with all that he is, and if only we had the eyes to see the wonder of his kindness. And it goes without saying that that's why kindness should be at the heart of everything we do as Christians. And we have to never forget the fact that the only reason we can call ourselves Christians is because God has been so extraordinarily kind to us. And if that kind God is dwelling in us by his Spirit, then surely we must always, always seek to be kind to others. And that should characterise every part of our lives. But we have to be so careful, and we have to work so hard at this. Now make no mistake, you've got to work really hard at this. I've got to work really hard at this, because you and I have so many features that can be just as easily used for unkindness as they can be for kindness. That's exactly what I was trying to say to the children with the box of matches. You can use it for good, or you can use it for awful things.

[31 : 48] And we are the same as Christians. The very same nature that God has given us, we can use it for glorious works, we can use it for sin. And that applies very much so when it comes to kindness. Our tongues, as I've seen to the children, are an incredibly clear example of that. With our tongues we bless our Lord and Father, with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. Oh, that God would make us kind in our words. Have you said, not asking, but in your hearts, who of us has said something unkind in the past week? I have. And yet we shouldn't. As we read in Titus 3, I just noticed it as I was reading it. Verse 2 in Titus 3, Speak evil of no one. Avoid quarrelling, be gentle, show perfect courtesy towards all people. That is a biblical imperative for my life and yours.

So our tongues, we can use it for unkindness, but let's not. Let's use it for kindness. Your thoughts can be the same, isn't that true? It's really easy to be negative in your mind.

It's really easy to be critical. But Paul is reminding us, the Bible is reminding us, Paul in particular, is that we should be the opposite and especially we should think of the good in others. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Paul is reminding us to be careful in how we think, to be careful in how we judge others. Always think the way you think, we have the choice, unkind or be kind. And let's always, always try to remember that choice. Same applies to our actions, same applies to our possessions. All of these things have glorious potential for kindness and incredibly dangerous potential for unkindness. So we've got to be on guard.

And that means avoiding things. And Titus 3 reminds us of many things that we should avoid. The saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things so that you may, you have believed in God, may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people, but avoid foolish controversies. Avoid genealogies, avoid dissensions, avoid quarrels about the law for their unprofitable and worthless.

As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. Our prayer must always be, Lord, give me a kind tongue. Lord, give me a kind mind. Lord, give me kind actions. Lord, give me a kind heart. And of course that is just the same as praying, Lord, make me like Jesus because he's the perfect model of kindness. So God has shown kindness in what he hasn't done. God has shown kindness in what he has done. Lastly, God shows kindness in what he will do. And that is the glorious truth we read about in Ephesians 2 forward to 7. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ

[35 : 38] Jesus. Now we have run out of time and we actually looked at these verses in much more detail a few weeks ago. So I just want to take one moment to ask a simple question.

What does God want to spend eternity doing? He wants to spend eternity showing you the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness. God wants to spend eternity being kind to you. And that's reminding us that even though God has been extraordinarily kind to us already, yet the best is yet to come. The best is yet to come for all of you as God's people. And the new creation will be a glorious place where God is immeasurably kind to you and to every single person who is trusting in him. What a thought and what a God. That that's his plan, that's his goal. I want to spend eternity being kind to you. And it's vital that we grasp that because one of the devil's biggest lies is that God won't be kind. Now

I am almost certain, in fact I think I can say, I can guarantee that the devil will have told you that lie at some point in your life, that God won't be kind to you. Don't become a Christian, it won't be that good. It'll spoil your life. Don't go to the prayer meeting, it's going to cause too much grief. Don't serve in the church, you can't do it and it won't go well. Don't do this, don't do that because God, it won't go well. All of that is the devil's lie that says, God will not be kind to you. Which laid the heart of his lies to Eve. God doesn't have your best interests in heart, he knows that if you eat that three you'll be like him. He's not being kind to you. The devil wants us all to think that God won't be kind and it holds back thousands of people and so we must, must remember that God is kind and he will be kind to you if you live for him and follow him and he will be so, so, so kind to you for the endless ages of eternity. Kindness is at the heart of God's eternal goal for you. That's what God is promising us all forever if we trust in him. And that brings us back to the most important question of all which is what we said near the start.

Has God's kindness led you to repentance? Let's pray.