

KINDNESS

Scripture Passage:

(Eph.4:31-32 “31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

This is my pre-Christmas, post-Thanksgiving message; first to me and then to others. We are at a time in my lifetime where the elements of vs 31 are at an all time high. People are looking for any reason to fight. Civil discussions have become a thing of the past. Even those people/groups that have been traditionally passive are joining in the fray.

Five Aspects of Christian Kindness From Eph.4:31-32:

1. The Extent of Christian Kindness

How much kindness should we show? What should kindness replace? Bitterness, yes. Outbreaks of clamoring belligerence, yes. Rumor-mongering and evil speaking behind backs, yes. Malice, yes. All these, no exceptions, all these must go. These are part of the old corrupt self that must be put off. And kindness is the opposite that replaces these things. So when Paul says in Ephesians 4:26 that we should be angry but not sin, and then says in verses 31–32, get rid of anger and be kind, what are we to take him to mean?

2. The Depth of Christian Kindness

The point here is that Christian kindness is not merely an external change of manners; it is an internal change of heart. Verse 32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted. . ." Christian kindness is tenderhearted.

3. The Pattern of Christian Kindness

Two patterns of Christian kindness are given for us. First is the forgiveness of God. Second is the love of Christ. The first we see in Eph.5:32: "The second pattern is seen in Eph.5:2, "and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Kindness is a manifestation of the love of Christ.

People's desire to see punishment for sin affects their ability to show kindness. When we come to understand that Christ was punished for ALL sin on the cross then that desire is replaced by a heart of kindness and compassion.

4. The Instrument of Christian Kindness

What is the "instrument" of Christian kindness? What is it that we must employ or exert in order to become kind and tenderhearted? The answer is found in the form of the verb (be put away from you) in verse 31. Literally it says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be taken away from you." If the Spirit of God does not come into our lives to do a supernatural work, then we may be able to spruce up the outward manners of kindness, but the poison within will remain.

5. The Source of Christian Kindness

The text tells us three things we must believe if the Spirit of God is to conquer unkindness in our hearts.

- A We must believe that Christ died in our place. Eph.5:2 "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."
- B We must believe that God has forgiven all our sins. Eph.5:32: ". . . forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." To know and believe that every slap in God's face has been forgiven freely in Jesus Christ should break a Christian's heart and make it lowly and tender and kind. God's glorious forgiveness is a fact that Christians either don't really understand or they take it for granted.
- C Finally, and most importantly, we must walk in the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Only then can the fruit of kindness be poured out of us to others. Gal.5:16-17