

2 Chronicles 10:1-11; Colossians 3:1-15  
*"A Life Full of Kindness"*

Tears welled up in the eyes of the Salvation Army officer Captain Shaw as he looked at the three men before him. Shaw was a medical missionary who had just arrived in India, and the Salvation Army was taking over this particular leper colony. These three men had shackles and fetters binding their hands and feet, cutting their diseased flesh. Captain Shaw turned to the guard and said, "Please unfasten the chains."

"It isn't safe," the guard replied, "these men are dangerous criminals as well as lepers!"

"I'll be responsible. They are suffering enough," Captain Shaw said, as he put out his hand and took the keys, then knelt and tenderly removed the shackles and treated their bleeding ankles and wrists.

About two weeks later Captain Shaw wondered whether freeing those criminals was the right thing to do; he had to make an overnight trip and he was anxious leaving his wife and child alone at the colony. His wife insisted that she wasn't afraid, knowing God would be with her.

The next morning when she went to the front door, she was startled to see the three criminals lying on her steps. One explained, "We know the doctor go. We stay here all night so no harm come to you." That's how these dangerous men responded to an act of kindness. Christ came to set the prisoners free!

Someone once said, "One kind act will teach more love of God than a thousand sermons!"

Kindness. People recognize kindness when they see it! And "kindness will always attract kindness." (Sophocles, 496-406 B.C.)

The Bible says that kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. With Christ in your life, the Holy Spirit is shaping you to reflect His character! **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...** (Galatians 5:22-23)

As Christians believers, we are being formed by kindness through the Spirit of God!

I want to introduce you to a son of Solomon. Solomon, who was the wisest man on earth, was king over Israel following the death of his father, David. When Solomon died, (from David to Solomon) the leadership of the people passed to his son, Rehoboam. We're reading about the first big decision Rehoboam faced as king over his people. [[READ 2 Chronicles 10:1-11](#)]

1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of this, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. 3 The leaders of Israel summoned him, and Jeroboam and all Israel went to speak with Rehoboam. 4 "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

5 Rehoboam replied, "Come back in three days for my answer." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

7 The older counselors replied, "If you are good to these people and do your best to please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."

8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers. 9 "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

10 The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers who want a lighter burden: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! 11 Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to

make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!”

Strict and harsh treatment! From where does that advice come?

He had a chance to demonstrate kindness! One scholar called the supervision of Rehoboam “a miserable story of an imbecile and arrogance.”

Politically, the kingdom was not in good shape and only Rehoboam could make things better! The people were willing to serve Rehoboam if only he would serve them and make their lives a bit easier.

When the Son of God came to earth, He came as a servant and He taught His disciples to lead by serving. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet as an example of humble service and He wants us to follow *His* example, not examples of “great leaders” in the secular world.

Led by a rival, Jeroboam, the leaders of the northern tribes protested the heavy yoke Rehoboam’s father had laid on them, including high taxes and forced labor.

But let’s give Rehoboam credit, asking for time to think and seek counsel. But there’s no evidence that the king sought the Lord in prayer or that he consulted with the high priest or with a prophet.

One of the marks of David’s leadership was that he was willing to humble himself and yield to the will of God!

In making big decisions, we should look for spiritual counsel, but let’s be sure the counselors we talk to are mature saints who are able to guide us with godly wisdom. The British writer Frank W. Boreham said, “We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us.” The decisions *we* make shape our reputation in the community and the chronicles.

The elders gave Rehoboam the best advice: be kind to the people and the people will serve you. But Rehoboam had already made up his mind, motivated by pride, not humility, and pride knows nothing of gentleness and kindness.

His father had written the book of practical proverbs and wisdom, one of which said, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

Solomon’s first official decision brought him the reputation for great wisdom (1 Kings 3:16-28), but his son’s first official decision told the nation that he was foolish and unfit to lead.

We value kindness. In fact, we can be surprised by kindness – because it can be so rare! If there is a conflict in your home, a problem in a relationship, it may be due to a lack of kindness. And yes, we can find an absence of kindness in the church from time to time. I’ve been guilty. Maybe you have too.

Les and Leslie Parrott are Christian counselors, and one day as she was working at home, she said to her husband, “You didn’t have to do that.”

“I know; I wanted to,” he answered.

All morning Leslie had been working like mad to finish a report that was due. It was an unusually hot, muggy Seattle morning in August, and she was parked at the kitchen table in front of her laptop when Les slipped in and set up a fan to cool the room.

“I don’t know if it’ll make a difference,” he said, trying to place the fan in just the right spot, “but I thought it was worth a try.”

Leslie said she didn’t know if the fan did make a difference, but she *remembered* feeling suddenly calmed by her husband’s kindness. Why? Because he didn’t have to go to the whole

trouble of scrounging around the basement, wearing his bathrobe, to find the old fan in an attempt to make his wife feel better. She didn't ask him; he never heard her complain about the heat. He wasn't looking for appreciation, to make amends, or get something in return. It was just plain kindness on his part.

It takes a special kind of love, a godly love, to look beyond our own comfort, conveniences, and the list of "need-to-do" things, in order to share kindness.

Kindness is an *action!* You can't generate kindness – and keep it a secret! If kindness is kept as a secret, it is only a good intention. And you know what they say about good intentions? "The road to hell is paved with good intentions!"

If kindness is removed from a loving heart, it's only a matter of time before the heart atrophies or withers and love is lost all together.

In marriage, practice kindness! If you want to know whether a man is kind, don't ask him, ask his family! Most likely, you were kind while you were dating! Don't stop! Because there will be awful consequences if you stop!

Kindness is an action paired with *compassion!* The Greek word used for "kindness" in the New Testament means "useful." I like that. Kindness is handy and convenient at a time of need!

Have you experienced God's kindness?

Did you know that an act of kindness begets another act of kindness? That's what the Bible means by the "Fruit of the Spirit" growing in your soul! If you have experienced God's kindness then you have a heart to extend kindness! A kindness received is a kindness shared! Listen to what the Bible says to us: **"When God our Savior revealed His *kindness and love*, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of His grace He declared us righteous and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life."**

Titus 3:4-7

In that passage we hear it over and over: "*He* saved; *He* washed; *He* poured out; *He* declared!" *He* gave! God gave us what we needed before we knew what it was we needed!

This passage tells us that we are rescued from sin and death ...not because of anything we've done, but because God is a God of love and kindness!

So put on kindness! It's our Bible lesson today! We already read the first part of Colossians 3 – We found a literary construction the Apostle Paul used: *Since* this happened, *then* this would be your response! Vs. 1: ***Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, (then) set your sights on the realities of heaven...*** Since you have been raised with Christ ...then (vs. 5) "put to death the sinful earthly things lurking in you."

In some translations it may say "crucify the things of the flesh..." And the question demands to be asked, "How do we put to death the sinful earthly things within us?"

Let's read more: [READING Colossians 3:12-15]

<sup>12</sup> Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

We have the same literary construction: *Since* this happened... *then* this is to be our natural response!

But did you catch what your response is to be? (vs. 12)

***Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves... then you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*** Then everything else we read through vs. 17 is what God instructs us to do – or to be!

Christian believers are to clothe themselves, or surround themselves inside and out, with a different manner than the world. Our rules, and our goals are different. We live in the world but we are not of the world any longer! The values we follow are eternal values, God's values! We are to practice new habits and make new choices! We cannot downplay or underestimate the power of what this means: new habits and new choices! **Clothe yourselves – or choose – tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

This kind of kindness imitates God's character. Remember, kindness is an action paired with compassion, so we're looking for ways to take the initiative to meet specific needs. And frankly, we may do that quite well with strangers or with those in the office.

But the big challenge for some of you is to practice kindness with those you know best, behind the closed curtains of your homes. After our charitable smiles fade and our willingness to help – in public – winds down and the weary routine of house messes and old habits never seems to change, we may snarl at the partner we loved enough to marry. We turn cantankerous toward adorable children. And in the middle of a tirade about how no one ever takes their shoes or books or toys upstairs, the phone rings and we adjust our tone to sound like a very polished Oprah, "Hello?"

We try. We really do. But to tell the truth, we're tired.

There are no breaks at home where children constantly need something. They don't clock out at 5:00 p.m., they don't always nod off at 8:00 p.m., and they still have you on speed-dial after 11:00 p.m. We struggle to control the influences and interruptions coming from outside our home. But inside, well ...meeting needs is what we're there for, isn't it? The job of a mother never ends! When a child is sick, who else but Mom will satisfy the cry for help? When a husband hits a schedule bump at work, Mom will be the one to pinch-hit for him! Always.

Elisa Morgan, who was President and CEO of MOPS, (Moms of Preschoolers), wrote, "We can't give to others what we don't have ourselves. Oh, we think we're being incredibly selfless and spiritually mature to give to others while ignoring our own needs. But are we?"

"Even Jesus didn't ignore His own needs 24/7. Kindness to others begins with kindness to ourselves... What if it's *less* kind to ignore ourselves when we become run-down grouches, and *more* kind to do enough self-care to change our attitude? What if that's what Jesus meant when He encouraged us all to love our neighbor as *we love ourselves*?" How are you doing, loving yourself?

Jesus said: **A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart... What you say flows from what is in your heart.** (Luke 6:45) "We can be kind to others only when we continue to replenish our tank of kindness by being kind to ourselves." (Elisa Morgan)

"So in order to be kind to our family, we need to be kind to 'me.' (*self*)"

So take time to breathe. We have all been kind. But we have all been unkind and impatient as well. Let's acknowledge that we are a work in progress! The fruit is still growing in

our heart!

Today we're learning that kindness can flow from the kindness received. And we've received the kindness of God's love. Look carefully to see and understand the kindness of God!

Secondly, we have to be kind to ourselves. Steal some time to take care of you. Be intentional about being kind to those you love the most. Which family member could use your kindness? And let's not think which one *deserves* your kindness, for your qualifications may be unreasonable. Remember, kindness shared is a kindness received. You can see change by being the change you want to see in others.

What action can you take today to show kindness?

Realize, too, that just because you're going to start the new day with kindness, not everyone will get the memo to get with the plan! The rest of your family may still be in the same old routine. But you'll see that routine change through acts of kindness! Be in it for the long haul!

INVITATION: The message of these sermons on the *Fruit of the Spirit* isn't really about kindness or patience or peace or joy or love. It's really about you and God, your relationship to your heavenly Father. It's about how you live in this world while you have citizenship in heaven! These lessons are about grace poured into your life from the Creator and Almighty Holy and Loving God – who chooses to come and live in you! Not a perfect you – but the *you* you present to Him today!

This is all I have! It's just me as I am today. And that's good enough!

Coming to Him today – you will find a love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness taking shape in your life! Are you ready to let Jesus have more of you?