

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, PART 5 (KINDNESS)
Galatians 5:22-23

Well I'm no expert on church culture but I do know that every church has one. Each one has a certain feel to it. I've been in dozens of churches on a couple of continents: inner city churches and small country churches, churches in-between; churches oriented towards cowboys, towards millennials, more traditional churches; and I'll be honest, I could less about a lot of those things. What I really started to look for more than anything was whether or not they preached the Word and secondly, what the people were like? It can be pretty intimidating walking into a church for the first time and nothing makes you feel more welcome in a than a kindred spirit who takes an interest in you and just asks you some simple questions: what's your name? where you from? What brings you here? I've really come to appreciate that. You can tell a little bit about it based on the church's website and doctrinal statement, but what the people are like really defines it more than anything. The people are the church. So what's the culture of our church? What are we known for? That's what we're going to talk about today. Specifically, developing a culture of kindness. Today, as we read the passage, see if you can guess what the culture of the Galatian church had become under the legalistic false teaching of the Judaizers. Starting in verse 13.

If you are visiting with us, we have been in this portion of Scripture for a while now, going through it pretty heavily and are now mainly focusing on the fruit of the Spirit, studying each virtue individually. In our context Paul has been describing the blessed freedom that we have in the Christian life and it is a glorious, burden-lifting, heart-filling, smile-producing freedom. The more I study this passage, the more I want to smile because I'm amazed by God's grace! We no longer have to be slaves to the Law or any sort of legalism. We no longer have to be slaves to the law of sin at work in the members of our body. Christ has set us free from the Law and the law of sin by the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8)! We've been born again by the Holy Spirit, baptized by Him and made alive. We have been forgiven, redeemed, justified and freed from condemnation! We have an Abba Father, "father's lap" relationship with God – we can go right into the Holy of Holies and sit on His lap and cast all your anxiety on Him and He cares for you like that! There are just so many blessed gospel realities that have been touched on in Galatians and certainly, part of walking by the Spirit is to focus on those heavenly positional truths of the Spirit. To get our minds out of the gutter of sin and self and despair and darkness and look up! Remember He has set us free!

This kind of blessed freedom changes not only our hearts and minds, but because of that, has a real effect countenance – the way we appear and how we interact with others. The fruit of the Spirit changes us from the inside out. In contrast to the Spirit's fruit, do you think the group of Judaizers were a joy-filled bunch that were just a pleasure to be around? I don't know about you but when I imagine them, I imagine them dressed in their robes like a Pharisee, carrying around a stern face or frown – the very nature of their face says no to everything. The kind of guys you don't ask questions because you know the answer's no and you'll be frowned upon. It's a face dominated with criticism and lack of patience. They probably didn't really care about people, but were in it for themselves (4:17). But grace produces a sweeter, more patient spirit. Look at the fruit of the Spirit! In writing this portion of Galatians, Paul didn't just have the countenance of the individual in mind, but the countenance of the churches in mind. He had his eye on correcting the quarrelsome culture of the Galatian churches.

I. THE CHURCH IS TO HAVE A CULTURE OF KINDNESS.

That's the clearest, "thus saith the Lord" way of putting this single word into our context. Paul is saying like he did elsewhere, **get rid of the quarrels and put on kindness**. Most of the when we look at this portion of Scripture or it is approached and interpreted, our minds immediately go to

the war within the individual, and it does start within the individual – but Paul has in mind here the overall culture of the church. Look at what it's become! This is what legalism does to a church: They are biting and devouring one another instead of loving one another (5:16); the flesh is being energized by the Law (1 Cor. 15:56), leading to lawlessness. There are factions growing, outbursts of anger, jealousy, strife (5:20-21). They're boastful, challenging one another, envying one another (5:26); they weren't sharing or being generous (6:6); they weren't doing good to others (6:10) because they're too obsessed with themselves and focused on themselves. That's what happens when you forget Christ is enough for you. These false teaching Judaizers that were trying to bring their legalism into the church were destroying the countenance of the church, giving it a new face. It needed a face life by the touch of grace – to understand again that Christ is enough still, in their salvation as well as their sanctification – because when you understand that, having your minds set on gospel realities, it changes you and produces the fruit of the Spirit, which is very attractive by the way, because it's all Christlike qualities and characteristic of Christ and it draws people to Christ. People see Christ in us. They see His kindness, hopefully a culture of kindness.

II. THE SPIRIT OF GOD PRODUCES KINDNESS. (chrestotes)

It is His fruit He produces when we rely on Him and surrender ourselves to His purpose. One of my greatest fears in preaching is for people to come away from a message hearing, “Be patient or else. Be kind or else,” as if I'm just preaching moralism and behavior modification. Conformation without transformation. This fruit of the Spirit is more than just behavior change, it's the result of a genuine change of heart through faith in Christ. To an extent, a man without the Spirit can be kind, but not like what we're talking about. This is kindness produced by the Spirit is for the worst quarrels and He produces it supernaturally in the believer who is surrendered to Him.

Last week we looked at patience, and patience and kindness go hand in hand as **byproducts of love**. 1 Corinthians 13 says love is patient, love is kind. Patience was this ability to absorb shock and take in harsh words or things done to us **without retaliation**. Patience is lengthy. God lengthens our fuses so we don't blow up so easily. The psalmist even described God anthropomorphically, not literally, as having a long nostrils (anger is vented through the nostrils). There a long-distance element to patience. It is the lengthy, **passive byproduct of love**. Kindness, on the other hand, is more of an **active byproduct of love**.

❖ Kindness is a gentle and active byproduct of love.

It is well-described as a gentle action toward others in our interactions with them. Some of your translations might even translate this word as gentleness. There's an overlapping there: It's gentle. It's kindly. It's also very **serviceable**. It starts *inwardly* by the Spirit with an attitude of kindness, **a kindred spirit**, but is really seen through the realm of *external* service towards one another. While longsuffering or patience holds back vengeance and retaliation when we're wronged, kindness actually goes the extra mile and actively bestows mercy on the undeserving. While patience is characteristic of long nostrils, kindness is characteristic of **long arms** – reaching out. **Last week we learned that we need long nostrils like our God and this week we learn that we need long arms like our God!** Psalm 18:16 says, “He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew me out of deep waters.” There's no place on earth He can't reach with His arm from Heaven. There's no ocean depth that He can bring you up out of. Man can't go to the bottom of the ocean to get you, but God can. He can pull you up out of the depths. What's neat about Hannah Hansen's ministry with the deaf blind is that in order to reach them, you literally reach out to them using sign language in the palm of their hands. You reach out to reach them.

I love the practicality of kindness. I don't want to get too specific with application and keep you from hearing the application that the Spirit has for you this morning, but being kind can be as simple as holding the door open for someone. Stopping and listening to someone. Helping them out. Basically, to sum it up, **it's looking out for others' interests and not just your own.**

As far as the **opposite of kindness is concerned**, the Bible doesn't paint a pretty picture where kindness is lacking, as we can see from the Galatian church culture. Kindness is contrasted with a contentious, harsh, bitter, spirit – whatever is destructive to relationships and to each other or even just ignoring others' needs. If you want a great illustration for the opposite of kindness, you should go to the demolition derby at the Box Butte County Fair this week! A bunch of guys demolishing each other and trying to put the other out of the race. That's the opposite of kindness. Destroying one another. Hosea 4:1 says, "the Lord has a case against the land, because there is no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land...There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed." No kindness in the land. 1 Peter 2:3 says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and evil slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." The kindness of the Lord is something that we taste. We can sense it. And **if we're growing in respect to salvation, we will be growing in kindness like Him.**

When we're focused on God's kindness to us in the gospel, we sense our need to be kind to others. God was active in bringing us grace and showing us mercy, so we become active agents who show mercy and extend grace to others. **Kindness is like grace and mercy in action.** Titus 3:4 uses this same Greek word for kindness here (chrestotes) to entitle Christ as the kindness of God. "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for man appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." That is His title. Jesus is the kindness of God, the very definition of it. Titus 2:11 says He actually *brought* salvation to all men. He actually did it – He stepped out of Heaven and became a man and walked on the earth as we do. Christ's life, from the incarnation to ascension, was **a visible, active display of God's kindness.** And according to Ephesians 2:7, He is going to be showing us His kindness throughout the ages to come.

The **wax fruit (fake fruit) of kindness** is doing something for others just to make myself look good or feel good or because I have to, not just because I want to. Wax fruit kindness does things, but it grumbles because it has to. Kind of like telling two kids to share and they do it, but not cheerfully. Jonah's kindness to Nineveh was a wax fruit kindness. He preached to them and they repented, but his heart wasn't with them. It reminds me of Proverbs 23:6-7 – "Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, or desire his delicacies... he says to you, 'Eat and drink!' [looks kind] but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten and waste your compliments." Wax fruit kindness treats people like a number instead of a person. It doesn't take an interest in others.

❖ **Real kindness takes interest in others (a kindred spirit).**

Timothy was a man of true kindness. Paul said of him, "I have no one else of **kindred** spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare" (Phil. 2:20).

For the capstone I just want to look at a couple biblical examples of kindness.

III. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF KINDNESS.

And there's almost a general consensus that two of the greatest stories on kindness are that of David with Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9 and that of the Good Samaritan from Jesus' teaching in Luke 10.

David and Mephibosheth: 2 Samuel 9

You don't have to turn there, but David is a guy who is overwhelmed by the Lord's kindness towards him. He has been chosen by God to be king and the promise of Abraham was extended to Him in chapter 7, saying he would have an eternal house, throne and kingdom and his attitude is, "Who am I, O Lord God, and who is my house, that You have brought me thus far? Why show me this great kindness? And then he turns around two chapters later and pours out that same kindness on someone else, a stranger even. In chapter 9, "Is there anyone left of the house Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" And he is led to a man named Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, son of Saul. And David, if you read it, ends up restoring to Mephibosheth all of the land, the house, and belongings of Saul and he eats at David's kingly table regularly. He had people even cultivate the land for him and bring him the produce. He was basically David's own son, a child of the king, doing nothing to deserve that kindness. That's the way God treats us. Who are we that the King of Heaven would show us that same kindness and invite us into His kingdom to eat at His table? When you think of that kindness, our response is lot like Mephibosheth's response to David: "What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?"

The Good Samaritan: Luke 10

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a very renowned parable of Jesus. It's found in Luke 10, we'll begin in verse 29. Let's go ahead and turn there for the rest of our time and I've been praying that the Lord would refresh this parable in our hearts this morning, reminding us to look out for others' interests. Jesus here is being questioned by a lawyer and has reaffirmed a lawyer's interpretation of the Law. His job was to know the Law and he concluded correctly that it is summed up in two commands: love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. But, he wants to justify himself so he asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Is it just the person that lives next door? Only Jews? Gentiles included? He's looking for a loophole. Jesus says in verse 30, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead." And that was a normal experience on that road during Jesus' day – the Romans had a fort on that road called the "red and bloody way"¹ for two reasons: the rocks are red, but a lot of blood was spilt on that road. It's rugged road with cliffs and turns, notoriously dangerous, favorite of robbers. It was also a huge climb up to Jerusalem – 3,300 ft in 14 miles. There's a neat video on the YouTube about this road called "11 Road from Jericho to Jerusalem from the Air" or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6Uz9gIdm68>. Even in the 19th century you would have to pay safety money to Sheiks so that you wouldn't get robbed. It reminds me of the middle of nowhere backroads in the Andes mountains of Argentina. Many cops are crooked and will pull you over to find anything they can to write you a ticket, threaten to confiscate your car and take you in unless you gave them all your money. But continuing on, "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, he passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you." Which of these three do you think proved to be a

neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said, "Go and do the same [present imperative – keep on doing the same]." But you have **a priest and Levite**, both looked up to and thought of being really religious and right with God and holy –but they both pass by this man. And they not only passed by, they did it on the other side! It's like they went out of their way not to go near him. They didn't want to be contaminated. **The priest** may have been thinking, "Well there's a good chance he is dead or could die and I can't touch a dead man or I'll be unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11) and won't be able to minister or teach. I'll have to turn around and go offer a sacrifice as well and people might see that and think I've sinned if I do that." So he justified himself for not being able to help because he has to serve God – sacrifice over mercy (Mt. 9:13). **The Levite** also did the same. All priests were from Levi but not all Levites were priests. Levites who weren't priests took care of things like the tabernacle and furnishings and same thing: he may have thought, "I can't touch him either. Besides that, I'm tired and it's getting late and you don't want to be on this road when it's dark."

So the honor goes to the Samaritan who stops. And the honor being given to the Samaritan in this story had to infuriate the religious leaders listening. *Samaritans were the dogs.* They were a mixed Jewish-Gentile blood, despised by the real Jews. The Jews that were leftover in the land when the Assyrians took Israel into bondage intermarried with them and that was against the Law so they were thought of as half-breeds (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2-11). A Jew from Judea wouldn't even go through Samaria but would travel all the way around it. That's why the Samaritan woman in John 8 is so shocked that Jesus would ask her for water, "How is it that you being a Jew, would ask me for a drink?"

Neither Samaritans nor Gentiles were considered neighbors to the Jews, so this is how they worked around that whole command to love your neighbor found in Leviticus 19:18. A.T. Robertson said they split a theological hair to try and justify themselves from having to help someone who wasn't Jewish!¹ They were so good at finding loop-holes in the Law. And in this parable (and I wouldn't be surprised if this is a real story Jesus knows about), the half-breed Samaritan is the one who shows kindness and does what God desires most! The Samaritan put his own life at risk just by stopping to take care of this man – he could have been beat and robbed too. It certainly slowed him down and the sun could have went down and you don't want to be on this road when the sun goes down. He put him on his own mule and was forced to walk the long, rugged path. He put his own money out there without expecting for it to return. He put his own plans on hold – having to make an extra stop at an inn. He was being willing to be inconvenienced. I think the difference is a matter of questions: the priest and Levite both asked themselves, "What will happen to me if I help him?" But the Samaritan asked himself, "What will happen to the man, if I don't help him?"

Who are we going to be? The priest, Levite or Samaritan?

¹ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Vol. II Luke* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), 152.

² Ibid.