

Monday, April 10, 2017 - Kindness and Mercy

My brother Phil provides our study for this week...

'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." — Ephesians 4:30-32 (NKJV)

When one most deserves judgment, he welcomes nothing so much as mercy. If anticipating cruelty, kindness soothes the soul. A common saying observes, "You can draw more flies with honey than with vinegar." The wise man wrote, "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute," (Proverbs 15:18 NNAS). We do well to "sow" peace that we may "reap" tranquility. Inspired James teaches that many people-problems come from selfishness run amok. The desire to have our own way becomes, for some, reason enough for any slight or abuse. We feel justified in "doing to others because they did to us."

The "Golden Rule" teaches us the practical and moral truth that we must live contrary to the normal tendency "only to do good to those who have done us good, and to seek revenge on those who have done us ill." The Lord taught both in the Old and New Testaments one of the chief principles of divine revelation, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD," (Leviticus 19:18; compare Mark 12:30-31 and Romans 12:10-21).

James called this the Royal Law: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well," (James 2:8). Not only does this prove that Jesus includes law for Christians under His "grace system," its repetition illustrates its importance. Consider Galatians 5:14: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Since none of us is perfect then each of us will find himself occasionally either desiring the kindness of forgiveness, or needing to extend it to someone else. Jesus asked the obvious, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" (Matthew 5:46-47). Surely this must include being kind to others.

Listing spirituality's traits Paul wrote, "...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law," (Galatians 5:22-23). These traits tend in the direction of kindness and mercy, courtesy and respect. When describing the worthy woman, Scripture records, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness," (Proverbs 31:26).

Kindness is seldom misplaced. Jesus showed us the ultimate kindness in choosing to come to save us. Surely we can show kindness to each other (1 John 3:10-19). If we would be virtuous and wise in the sight of Heaven, let us live by the "law of kindness."

-- Philip Davis