

I Cor. 13:1-7; Eph. 4:31-5:2; Love is Kind I. What Kindness Does II. What Kindness is Not III. Perfect Kindness Seen

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, kindness is a trait that is lacking in our world. Without isolation and our suspicion- we are more than ever prone to ignore those in need. Like the first two men in the parable of the Good Samaritan- crossing over to the other side of the road. But true love is not content to ignore others. Rather- true, Christ like love is a kind love. As we saw a few weeks back- this kind of love is needed. It is a necessary mark of God's people because it was and is shown by our God. In fact, one of the church fathers reported that the early Christians were known for their kindness and love- even loving the pagans more than their own people did. Tertullian tells us that sometimes Christians were simply referred to as the kind ones. So today we see that the Jesus Christ calls us to be filled with lovingkindness. Kindness is both the mark of true love and it is the fruit of the Spirit.

### **I. What Kindness Does**

We start then by considering what Kindness is and what it does. Kindness- here in I Cor. 13- is a word that is only found once in the entire OT. Most of the time, the word kind is translated as thing- something we do. Be kind. But here the word "chrestuetia" is actually an active verb. To be in the act of kindness. A noun turned into a verb. This describes a person who is warm, generous and helpful. To be a useful member of the body, to give freely and serve liberally. To be mild and benevolent. Paul is defining love in what it does- telling us how to live with a loving heart. To have lovingkindness is to be generous with your time and your gifts. As the deacons are called to be stewards of the talents we have in the church- the benevolent arm of the church is when we show mercy and caring concern for the well being of others. To be helpful towards those in need- to serve with the good of the other in mind. Kind love lends both a hand and a dollar. When kindness is linked to patience- as it is in v. 4- we find under this fountainhead that kindness and patience are the key to battling the ills that follow. In other words- lovingkindness replaces bitterness, envy, boasting, anger and rage. As the opposite of doing evil is to do good- a kind love is one that sympathetic and caring. Tender-hearted and

compassionate! This kindness is needed in every area of our life. Starting in the home- we are called to be kind! Now this couple in front here- and anyone with small children- will need to learn patience. As we saw two weeks ago- love is patient. But Ed and Kathy -and every parent- is also called to show love that is kind. What does kind love look like? Kind love is one that is willing to listen to the cares and concerns of others. Kindness not only puts a Band-Aid on a scrapped knee- but kindness is also considerate of a person's ability and maturity. We could say that kindness is sympathetic to others. Not being unnecessarily harsh or too busy to care. Kindness and gentleness- patience with sympathy. Rough hands can damage small plants- but gentle and kind hands are needed in the home.

But also, remember the context here. Paul is writing to a church that needed kindness. They were not serving along side of each other with kindness. No- they were seeking to be first- pushing for the best seat- grabbing the most wine- speaking over others and refusing to let others use their gifts. The boasting in their own abilities and belittled others. Loving to hear their own voice- and refusing to listen to others! But that is not kindness! No, kindness in the church means that being willing to take a hit for the team- to take a back seat when necessary and to lead when others cannot. Instead of using words to break and tear down, we use our kind words to bind, build up and heal! Kindness seeks the other's good- puts their needs before your own. Kindness is undeserved- it overlooks wrongs- and often kindness softens those who receive it! Kindness is that attitude needed when we minister to one another! Generous and considerate! Think of someone in our church who is kind- what makes them kind? How do you see kindness? A sympathetic look- or a warm smile- or an encouraging word? That is lovingkindness. Kind like Ruth was towards Mara- her bitter mother in law. Or like David to Mephibosheth- Jonathan's lame son. As Eph. 4:32 says- be kind to one another- tender-hearted! Serving with kindness!

## **II. What Kindness is Not**

After revealing that Love is kind- Paul gives us a few characteristics that are hinderances to that said kindness. Love is not rude. To be rude is to harsh, evil and uncaring. It is not only unbecoming, it is unchristian! I remember a song my children used to listen to- about Isabel the piggish girl. A little child with a temper is like a pig with a gold ring in its snout. As Prov. 11:22 teaches- external beauty is nothing without inner grace! So being rude- throwing tempers and fits of rage destroy Christian characteristics. A rude person pushes their way to the front- and has no consideration for those who come next! Like the sheep of the OT who dirtied the water with their feet so that others could not drink. When we become angry, we are no longer kind. When we lose our patience, we tend to become harsh. The opposite of kindness is to be mean spirited. So to teach a child to be unselfish- to be generous and kind- is to teach them to reflect the heart of Christian love! Or as the church in Corinth found out, useless argument, harsh tones and evil intents and looks is contrary to the mark of a loving body. Not only is love not rude, it is also no self-seeking as v. 5 says. It does not insist on its own way- or crave its own things. Love does not serve the self- nor does it seek the praises of men! It seems like the world revolves around some people- everything is about them! They need to be in the limelight. Its all about me- what I think and I need! My family and my church are there to meet my felt needs- to minister to me- to give me what I want. But that is not love. Love insists not on its own way- love by its very definition puts others before the self. As Paul said back in 10:33- I seek to please- to benefit everyone- so that many may be saved. Or Phil. 2:4- in humility count others more significant than yourself. In this NT church- someone who was talking would just keep on talking even though their turn was up- they liked to hear their own voice so that others could not bring an edifying word! Each was seeking their own. Kindness serves others. This really is a battle between the old self and the new man in Christ. The old man refuses to other others go first- refuses to let other be right- to have my own rights dropped. The old man always has to have the last word- always promoting self. As II Tim. 3:2 says- in the last days people will be lovers of self. But true love is kind- being compassionate and caring each day.

### **III. Perfect Kindness Seen**

But how can we show this kindness? If you struggle with being kind- how can you now go forth into a life of kindness? Well- as it was with patience- so it is with Kindness. Those who have experienced it will desire to show it! The way to grow in kindness is to ponder what Kindness God has given you! God's kindness can be seen in many ways. In His kindness, God causes the rain and sunshine to fall on both the just and the unjust. In many passages, the patience and kindness of our God are linked together- forming the reason why He allows this world to continue- so that we might have time to repent and believe. But as we focus specifically on the kindness of God this morning, listen to Psalm 63:3- the Lovingkindness of God is better than life. This kindness of our God is what moved Him to give us salvation! God is not only long-suffering, He is generous and quick to give blessings and gifts! Think of all the things that God has graciously given you- in His kindness what has He placed in your hand? As you count your blessings, you know that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Light! He in His lovingkindness has given you all these spiritual and physical gifts! Consider also what we read about Jesus in Titus 3:4- when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appear, He saved us! Once again, the kindness of our God- specifically Jesus Christ- is the reason we are saved! When the kindness of God was seen- revealed- we become saved! Because He is kind, He saves us! Now this kind, saving love is merciful. In spite of our sins- we are saved! Kindness shows love to the undeserving! Remember it is Jesus who would not snuff a smoldering wick or break a bruised reed! His kindness enabled Him to seek and save the lost- coming gently to bind and heal! Once again, the way in which we experience the lovingkindness of God opens us up to showing kindness to others. When we experience God's kindness, we can never be the same again! If you struggle with being kind and considerate- then think upon God's kindness shown to you! Our kindness to others begins when God is kind to us! If you can say- God has been so kind to me- then how can you help but be kind in your love shown to others as well.

To conclude, lovingkindness is the tender aspect of love- it is an active and attractive part of being God's people! Jesus Christ calls us to be filled with lovingkindness. So may our patient and kind love move those who have experienced true love- to show this love to others.