

## The Kindness of God

2 Samuel 9: 3; Titus 3: 4.

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The kindness of God! What a precious theme to engage our hearts in these days of self-assertion and violence! Kindness — the word itself contains the suggestion of "serving usefully." How familiar we are with the "term," found as it is in both Old and New Testaments; but as seeing such an expression intimately linked with the blessed God Himself — One so great and powerful — our hearts are filled with praise and worship. Wondrously indeed has our God shown His kindness in the movements of His most precious love!

As meditating upon this most attractive theme our affections are drawn irresistibly to our beloved Lord, He in whom (as we shall see so plainly from the Scriptures) the kindness of God has reached us. Indeed a cognate of the word for "kindness" is actually used of our Lord personally — "Thine Holy One" (Psalm 16: 10); "the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 89: 18). The kindness of God is personified in Christ! He "who is over all God blessed for ever" (Romans 9: 5), is the One from whose mouth "gracious words" proceeded (Luke 4: 22). Matthew records the Saviour's words — "All *power* is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28); marvellous indeed that the same gospel should give us also those other words of Christ — "I *am meek and lowly* in heart" (Matt. 11). Possessing "all power," and yet His every word and deed proclaiming the "kindness of God." Fittingly does Matthew quote the prophetic word "I have put My (Jehovah's) Spirit upon Him . . . a bruised reed shall He not break" (Isaiah 42).

It is a remarkable and truly blessed fact that in the Old Testament writings the kindness of God is mentioned in circumstances of failure and departure on the part of God's people. The graciousness of God shines like a brilliant jewel against the dark back-ground of sin. In Nehemiah 9 we hear the lament of the Levites as they recount the absolute failure of the people to respond to the promises and tender care of God. Pride; hardening of the neck; disobedience; no appreciation of what God had manifested amongst them; rebellion with desire to refuse all that God had done in a return to the bondage of Egypt! "But" — says the word — "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of *great kindness*, and forsookest them not." In the face of "great provocation" God in His "great kindness" visited them with "manifold mercies;" protection and guidance by night and by day; giving them "His good Spirit to instruct them;" and the manna and the springing well for their sustenance; "so that they lacked nothing." Truly the kindness of God is without compare!

Joel 2 speaks of "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness," in view of which he exhorts the people to "turn unto the LORD your God, for He is . . . of great kindness." Blessing is in His heart for His people and the following verses indicate the provision which, in His kindness, is available for a repentant nation. "The LORD will do great things . . . and ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you."

Even a prophet with the word of God in his mouth, may fail to appreciate the blessedness of God's gracious movements in mercy. Yea, indeed, disciples who had companied with One who was the perfect expression of the heart of God, were not conscious of the effects which that love should produce! (Luke 9). Jonah, displeased and angry, concerned more about his service than of the heart of

God whom he served, must confess "Thou art a gracious God . . of great kindness." Beloved brethren, is not this a timely word for us all? Happy indeed if in every little service for the Lord we can truly say "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Isaiah has the same precious theme — "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with *everlasting kindness* will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer . . For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee" (Isa. 54). What a day of fullest blessing awaits God's earthly people when, through His infinite kindness they shall "not remember the reproach of their (thy) widowhood any more;" their children shall all be "taught of the LORD" and established in peace; and nothing that is formed against them shall prosper.

The kindness of God to His people, the effects of which will be so blessedly and fully manifest in a day to come, may be the portion of the *individual* believer now. David in the Psalms expresses his own appreciation of this precious feature of God's dealings with him. Reproached, slandered, persecuted and maligned, he can say in Psalm 31, "Blessed be the LORD; for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness." We, too, as knowing something of the kindness of our God can say with David "O love the LORD, all ye His saints . . be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart." The days in which we are found bristle indeed with difficulties and sorrows; the opposition of Satan to the people of God is intense; but we can enter into the joy of heart that must have animated the Psalmist as he concluded each of the 26 verses of Psalm 136, "His loving-kindness endureth for ever" (New Trans.).

In the New Testament Paul uses the expression "the kindness of God" when writing to a *company* (Ephesus) and to an *individual* (Titus). In each instance the brilliant rays of this most precious outflowing of the affections of the blessed God shine in their beauty against the dark background of sin and death and the expression of the heart of man. It was "even when we were dead in sins" that the love of God was set upon us. How precious are the expressions used by the Holy Spirit of God to convey to us who "were dead in trespasses and sins," something of the marvellous disposition of our God towards us! "*Rich* in mercy;" "His *great* love;" "the *exceeding riches* of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2). In the letter to Titus the same dark background appears — disobedience, malice, envy, hatred! How precious and how fitting that against such an indictment of the human heart the title of "God our *Saviour*" should appear! "The kindness and love of God our Saviour . . through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Great and eternal love finding its expression in the dispensing of mercy to undeserving men. "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." At what infinite cost has the "kindness of God" reached us!

As our hearts taste and drink in something of the fulness and sweetness of divine love, should there not be a response to the heart of God Himself? It is an axiom of Christianity that the life and conduct of the believer should be determined by his knowledge of God. What we know of God should come out in expression in our walk. God has been fully revealed in love, and John, who makes this truth so clear, says also "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4: 8). Again Paul writes — "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love" (Ephesians 5: 1).

We live in a world in which philanthropy has some place, but there is a peculiar feature of love which is found only in those who know God. Romans 3: 12 says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." This word "good" is the same word that we have been considering — "kindness." Let us therefore take heed to (set our hearts on) the word of the Apostle "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Peter exhorts — "and

to godliness (add) brotherly kindness;" and in Galatians 5 Paul shows us the power we have in the possession of the Spirit of God, the fruit of which is, among other beautiful traits, "kindness" (New Trans.).

Having "tasted that the Lord is gracious" (kind) we are privileged to have our part in those "spiritual sacrifices" — the service of "an holy priesthood," "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2). Gladly, too, would we embrace the opportunity afforded us, as belonging to "a royal priesthood," of shewing "forth the praises (excellencies) of Him who has called (us) out of darkness into His marvellous light."

The story of David and Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9 is well known. In 2 Samuel 7 the king is restful in the presence of God, recounting His kindness and magnifying His Name and His goodness, and then in chapter 9 he is desirous of expressing the kindness of his God to others. How beautiful are his words — "that I may shew the *kindness of God* to him." Mephibosheth, linked by birth with the house of David's enemy; helpless and in circumstances of dire need, comes into the presence of one who has the desire and the power to shew to him the kindness that he himself had received from the blessed God. How magnificently he did it! and with what wonderful results! "Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha" (v. 12). Precious fruit from this manifestation of the kindness of God — for Micha means "who is like God?" We answer — He is supreme! His love and kindness are without compare!

Happy indeed if, as in the enjoyment of this precious love, we are able to so act that others may be won to an appreciation of, and a response to, the "kindness of God."

Could we add in closing that testimony on our part to the known and enjoyed love of God promotes an ever widening circle! Micha had *four* sons — all chronicled as connected with Benjamin — (the "son of the Right Hand") (1 Chronicles 8).