

Monday

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Romans 2:3-5

Patience and kindness are two sides of the same coin, and God shows us both in salvation. In patience and forbearance, God typically does not punish us immediately when we sin. We should be grateful for that patience, but that patience alone does not save us from sin and its punishment. By itself, patience only delays the just judgment of God. But God also shows us kindness. In patience, God does *not* immediately give us the punishment that we deserve. In kindness, God *does* do something good for us. The word for kindness refers to something that is good and useful. The thing we need most is salvation from sin, so God sent Christ to pay for our sin and provide the opportunity for salvation. In patience, God delays punishment. In kindness, God does something good and useful for us by sending Christ to provide the salvation that we so desperately need.

God's patience and kindness have a purpose. They are not designed simply to make us feel better or to allow us to live however we want without fear of consequences. They are specifically designed to lead us to repentance. As we see the patience and kindness of God, we should respond in a particular way. We should respond with faith and repentance and receive the salvation that God freely offers to us.

1. How do I respond to the patience and kindness of Christ? Have I received the forgiveness that He freely offers? Once I have received His forgiveness, do I now pursue living in a way that honors Him (cf. Romans 6:1-4)?

2. Even though we can struggle to show patience to those who offend us, it can be even more difficult to show kindness to them by doing something good for them. But God shows us kindness in sending Christ for us. In what way can I intentionally show kindness and do good for someone who has offended me or sinned against me?

3. Read Romans 12:19-21. God will punish those who reject the salvation that Christ provides. Romans 2:5 warns that those who presume on God's patience and kindness are storing up wrath for themselves. But according to Romans 12:19, is it ever my job to seek vengeance on those who reject my patience and kindness? Instead, how should I react to them?

Tuesday

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:29

Ephesians 4:22-24 teaches the principle of putting off the old self and putting on the new self. As believers, we should be putting off old sinful ways, learning to think differently, and putting on a new, right way of living. Then Ephesians 4:25-32 lists several things that we should “put off” and several things that we should “put on.” But each sinful thing that is to be put off directly relates to the good and right thing that we should put on (put off speaking falsehood/put on speaking the truth, etc). The good things listed are direct replacements for the bad things listed.

The word “corrupting” speaks of things that are rotten or evil. It is easy for us to speak in corrupt ways. We might speak poorly of others in order to make ourselves look better. When we disagree with someone, we also might attack them personally instead of genuinely discussing the validity of their idea. When someone offends us or speaks poorly of us, we might respond by speaking poorly of them. All of these are types of “corrupting talk” that we can have. But instead of this corrupting talk, our speech should build others up and give grace to them. We should be kind in our actions to others, but we also must be kind in our speech to others. Even when we speak to someone with whom we disagree, we should be aiming to build them up and give grace to them.

1. When I speak, who do I usually try to make look good? Am I trying to build myself up and make myself look good, or am do I try to build up others? How can I intentionally seek to build up others in the way that I talk?

2. When I disagree with someone, how do I speak to them? Do I cut them down and attack their idea, or do I kindly and respectfully discuss their idea? How can I develop the habit of speaking kindly even when I disagree with someone?

3. Just as we can intentionally look for ways to show kindness to others, we can look for ways to speak kindly to others. Who can I encourage this week? How can I speak kindly to them and help build them up in their spiritual lives?

Wednesday

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:31-32

As we saw yesterday, Ephesians 4:25-32 lists several good things that we should “put on” in direct replacement of the bad things that we should “put off.” So verses 31-32 are closely related. We put off bitterness, wrath, slander, etc, and we replace those things with kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. In these verses, our circumstances do not change; we change. We still face the same circumstances or interact with the same difficult people that *could* make us bitter or angry or lead us to slander someone else. But instead, we *should* react by being kind and tenderhearted to one another and forgiving one another.

These verses speak of difficult circumstances and people. If someone hurts us or sins against us, it is natural for us to get wrathful and angry at them. If they continue to hurt us or if they refuse to repent of what they did, then we can grow bitter against them. We can want to get vengeance on them or have them repay us for what we have lost. The word “clamor” refers to loud speaking or arguing. Often anger and bitterness lead to quarrelling with that person or slandering that person when we speak to others. But instead of those responses, verse 32 lists the right responses that we should have. Instead of being angry and quarreling with someone else, we should be tenderhearted toward them. Instead of slandering someone and speaking poorly of them to others, we should be kind to that person, both in our speech and in our action. Instead of growing bitter against someone, we should forgive that person. Once again, God’s forgiveness of us is the example that shows us how we should react to others.

1. How do I respond when someone sins against me? As we saw on Monday, Romans 12:19 teaches that it is not our job to seek vengeance against someone else. But even if I don’t seek vengeance, have I grown bitter against someone? If so, how can I repent of this bitterness and genuinely forgive this person?

2. How do I think and speak about the people who have offended me? Do I focus on the wrong things that they have done, or do I focus on the good things? How can I speak well of others instead of slandering them?

3. What does it mean to be tenderhearted and compassionate to someone else, even when they have done wrong? How can I be tenderhearted toward those who have done wrong against me?

Thursday

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

In this passage, Jesus drew a contrast between His invitation to salvation and the Pharisees and scribes' expectations of people. The Pharisees and scribes expected people to follow God's law as well as their own traditions that they had set up around the law. Christ condemned the Pharisees and scribes who tried to add to God's law and distorted the truth (Matt 23:1-4; Luke 11:46). But He also invited people to come to Him and follow Him. Jesus invites us to follow Him and learn from Him as His disciples. Those who had struggled under the heavy burdens of the Pharisees and scribes would find something different with Christ. Instead of working to try to earn our own righteousness and gain God's favor, we can receive the righteousness of Christ by faith. Christ gives rest to those who believe in Him, since He provides salvation for them. We can find rest in the salvation that Christ provides.

Christ also described a yoke and burden. As we follow Him in faith, we certainly should obey Him and serve Him. But in contrast to the heavy burdens that the Pharisees and scribes laid on people, Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The word for "easy" is the same root word that is translated as "kindness" in Galatians 5:22. The word speaks of something that is useful or good. A yoke that fit an animal well would distribute weight evenly and allow the animal to work more efficiently. A well-fitting yoke is useful and good because the animal would not be over-worked or over-burdened. The idea here is that the yoke Christ gives to us is well-fitting and good for us. Instead of laying a heavy burden on us and making things as difficult as possible for us, He shows us His kindness by giving us a yoke that is well-fitted for us. With His grace and help, we can follow and serve Him faithfully.

1. The Pharisees and scribes laid heavy burdens on the people, but Christ shows His kindness by giving us a good and useful yoke as He calls on us to serve Him. What do I learn about the character of God as I see this kindness?

2. It's easy for us to get busy with a lot of things, and it's easy for us to seek satisfaction in the things that we do. But how can I find rest in the completed work of Christ instead of trying to gain God's favor in my own strength? How can this rest encourage me as I serve Him?

3. We find rest in Christ, but He does call on us to follow Him and serve Him. The yoke and burden that He offers us is good and kind. Am I willing to receive this yoke and burden? Am I willing to serve Him?

Friday

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:4-5

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

Acts 28:1-2

On his way to Rome, Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta. The people of Malta showed a special kindness, even building a large fire to help the 276 people who had been shipwrecked. The people on Malta did not speak Greek, unlike many throughout the Roman Empire. Despite the language barrier and the fact that those who were shipwrecked were strangers, the people of Malta still showed kindness to them. Those who were shipwrecked also were not in a position to pay them back. They had cast their cargo and food overboard in order to lighten the ship in the storm, and the ship itself had suffered great damage when it ran aground. But the people of Malta still showed them great kindness in their time of need.

The word for “kindness” in Acts 28:2 is the word *philanthropia*, from which we get the English word “philanthropy.” The only other time this noun is used in the New Testament is in Titus 3:4, where it is translated as “loving kindness” (the adverb also appears in Acts 27:3). In Titus 3:4, God shows both His goodness (commonly translated as “kindness,” as in Galatians 5:22) and His loving kindness to us in salvation. We can follow the example of God’s kindness in a couple ways. As we saw on Monday, we can show kindness and do something good for those who have offended us or sinned against us. But we can also show kindness to those who are struggling or who cannot repay us, as the people of Malta did for Paul and his companions.

1. Do I tend to show kindness only to those who have been kind to me or who can repay me in some way? Or do I look for opportunities to show kindness to those in great need who cannot repay me?

2. Titus 3:4 refers to spiritual kindness; God met our spiritual need. Who is someone with a spiritual need that I can help this week? How can I help them (pray for them, encourage them, etc)?

3. Acts 28:2 refers to physical kindness; the people of Malta met physical needs. Who is someone with a physical need that I can help this week? How can I help them (provide a meal, complete a job, etc)?

Saturday

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

Similar to Ephesians 4, Colossians 3 uses the idea of putting off the old self and putting on the new self to list several works of the flesh that should be put off and several right works that should be put on. As believers, these character qualities and actions should be evident in all of our circumstances and all of our relationships. As verse 14 reminds us, Biblical love should guide and direct each one of these other character qualities and actions (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7). But several of these things also require the humility mentioned in verse 12. We naturally love ourselves, and we naturally look out for ourselves first. It requires humility to consider someone else as more important than ourselves, and it requires humility to give up our own rights, preferences, and priorities in order to serve someone else more effectively.

In John 13, Christ demonstrated humility and service by washing the feet of the disciples. This was normally the job of the lowest slaves. But Christ humbled Himself and served in this way. In doing so, He pictured what He would do on the cross (Philippians 2:3-8), and He also gave us an example for how we should humbly serve one another (John 13:15). Kindness to others requires the humility of Christ. We can show kindness to those who have sinned against us, and we can show kindness to those in great need. But in all areas of our lives, we should show kindness by seeking to serve others in whatever way we can.

1. Even when I do show kindness to those in need, do I think of myself as better than them? How can I demonstrate the humility of Christ and consider others more important than myself in order to serve others more effectively?

2. 1 Corinthians 9:12 says, "If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." Paul was willing to give up his rights in order to preach the Gospel more effectively. Biblical humility includes the willingness to give up our rights (and our preferences and priorities) in order to serve others more effectively. What am I willing to give up in order to serve others?

3. How should Biblical love guide and control my kindness and service to others?
