

Words of Truth



Being Kind Without Being Pushovers

By: Brian A. Yeager

As God's people, the Lord expects us to be kind. In fact, the Scriptures plainly state so. Notice how clear God's word is on this matter: *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another... And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering"* (Romans 12:10, Ephesians 4:32, and Colossians 3:12).

The word kindness means: "the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate" (New Oxford American Dictionary). We certainly want to be friendly (Proverbs 18:24), generous (II Corinthians 9:13), and considerate (I Corinthians 10:24 and Philippians 2:4).

Brethren, herein we find a problem. All too often we find an instruction (such as being kind) and people begin to overextend that instruction. Like all of God's will, we have to take into consideration all that God says on a subject matter. This cannot be done by just using a concordance and looking up verses that use the words "kind", "kindness", etc. (John 5:39 and II Timothy 2:14-18).

We know that the Lord is kind to all, even to the unthankful and the evil (Luke 6:35). We know we are supposed to follow the example of God (Ephesians 5:1). Thus, if we simply study some things about how God acts when it comes to being friendly, generous, and considerate we'll have an understanding of how to be kind without being a pushover. So, let's take a look at our Heavenly Father in how He is kind without being used and abused.

God Is Kind, But He's No Pushover

In the Scriptures we find that God does kind things for both the just and the unjust. When you examine the context of the following Scriptures you clearly see Jesus is teaching us not to be vengeful people (Romans 12:17-21). Jesus was teaching us all not to be consumed with grudges (James 5:9). Here is the text for our studies: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:43-48).

As we take this lesson deeper, we find that God sending rain on the just and unjust does not mean God is a pushover. How do we know this? Well, the Scriptures are abundantly clear that God does not even hear the request of everyone (II Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 15:29, Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 59:1-3, John 9:31, and I Peter 3:12). God is not a free handout god either. Notice what the inspired Apostle Paul wrote: *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (II Thessalonians 3:10).

In Jesus' teaching about the kindness of God, He wasn't teaching friendship with the world. God doesn't have fellowship with those outside of the light, as we cannot either (I John 1:3-7). God also tells us not to befriend the world (James 4:4). The world and God are polar opposites (I John 2:15-17). There is another common misapplication that falls to Scriptural reasoning.

God not only sends rain on the just and unjust, but He provided the means for salvation to all of us as well (John 1:29, I John 2:2, and I John 4:14). His kindness continues in that He sent the message of salvation, even now, into the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, and Colossians 1:23). Yet, even with these great acts of kindness, God is not a pushover when it comes to sin. Notice: *"The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation... The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet... I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish... And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"* (Numbers 14:18, Nahum 1:3, Luke 13:3, and II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Just As God, We Cannot Be Pushovers

While we're doing good to all men (Galatians 6:10; cf. Titus 3:8), we cannot do that which God will not do. We cannot allow ourselves to strengthen the hands of evildoers in any way (Jeremiah 23:14). We cannot be those who overlook the sins of others (Proverbs 27:5, Matthew 3:7-8, Luke 17:3-4, Acts 8:18-24, II Corinthians 13:1-2, I Timothy 5:20, and III John 9-11). While loving our neighbors (Galatians 5:14; cf. Luke 10:25-37), we cannot forget how we're supposed to feel and act about sin and sinners (Psalms 101:3, Psalms 119:104, Proverbs 28:4, Romans 12:9, I Corinthians 15:33, and I Peter 3:10-11).

Conclusion

It was the kindness of God that brought Jesus into the world (Titus 3:4). It will be the wrath of God that sends the majority of mankind to Hell (Romans 1:18 and Ephesians 5:6; cf. Matthew 25:31-46 and John 5:28-29). This does not make God unkind. In fact, His kindness is shown in how long He gives us all to repent (II Peter 3:9-10). We can be kind while not compromising as lights in this dark world (Philippians 2:15-16). Just as we've seen in God's kindness, there has to be a balance. Even after Jesus performed the miracle to feed 5,000 (John 6:5-21), He did not allow Himself to be a pushover (John 6:26-27). Let's follow our Lord's example in this and all other things (I Peter 2:21-22).