

An Eternal State of Forgiveness

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

People do not need our criticism. They need our kindness. They need our courtesy, and they need our love. That is one thing we can do as born-again believers in the corporate body of Christ. First, we must be kind to one another. Let us be extremely kind; let us go out of our way to be kind to one another. It is so beautiful to be kind. Kindness is a godly characteristic.

There was a preacher at a camp meeting in Maine who was backing out of a parking space and ran into another car. The preacher was nervous and frustrated when he got out of his vehicle, but the man who owned the damaged car just smiled. "It's just a car," he said. "So it has a few dents in it now. It doesn't mean a thing. Are you all right?"

That is kindness. Furthermore, that is forgiveness. The preacher and some of the others who witnessed it were amazed after seeing this man's calm and kind attitude.

It didn't cost him a thing to be kind at that moment. He lived in the privilege of letting Jesus Christ be his portion. His portion from Christ for that situation was to be kind and to forgive. How beautiful that is.

My prayer is that this booklet will inspire you as we examine Ephesians 4:32 in depth. I hope that the words will prompt us to choose continually to live in Christ's kindness and to express His tender heart as we live in the eternal state of forgiveness that is our portion from the Lord.

Chapter One

CHOOSE TO BE KIND EVERY DAY

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

I have been thinking a lot recently about some things I would like to see. More than anything right now I would like to see more of the Lord’s portion that is kindness. Christianity begins in the home, and the kindness of sharing God’s portion should start there every morning. When we wake up, even when we feel like we need more sleep, we can show kindness instead of being mean and quick-tempered. If we start out our mornings with the Lord’s portion, then God will help us to be kind in every place we go throughout the day.

The Word says, “Be ye kind one to another.” Just be gentle and courteous and kind. It is something that is needed all across America. It is needed in every segment of society. The Lord’s

kindness would change so many things.

Begin Your Day with Kindness

I know what it feels like to wake up in the morning and still feel exhausted and weary. On those days, a kind word really does something for me. Isn't it the same for you? Perhaps you are a bit uneasy about the day ahead, and though you are not exactly living in the flesh, you spend a few minutes "adjusting" and trying to get in the Spirit. You know what I am talking about. Sometimes we need a little time of transition to enter into Christ's portion so we can be enabled to share that portion with others. At these times, it is just so beautiful to encounter someone who is gentle and kind toward us.

Indeed, one of the most beautiful things in the whole world is when we are kind to one another. That is the Lord's portion. One thing we can do is purpose to be kind.

Purpose to be Kind

One of the things people have said over the years about our ministry is the kindness and the love that is revealed to them. Let us never lose that. It is a unique quality. Let us never lose our kindness. Whatever we are going through, when

we walk into the church building, let us be kind to everyone we see. Be kind on purpose. Pre-determine to be kind to everyone.

I like to operate with this attitude: Every person I meet has a particular need, and he could use my kindness. Someone, somewhere, is going through a trial. Some of those things are hidden from us, and some that we know about are much more intense than we realize. The one thing you or I can do is to be kind to everyone.

Be kind one to another. Oh, what a beautiful verse!

Chapter Two

THE SENSITIVITY OF A TENDER HEART

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

The original Greek text reveals that the word “tenderhearted” describes a soft and sensitive attitude to other people because the heart is so tender.

I remember being in a meeting with Dr. Lewis, one of my dear friends. During the meeting, I took a phone call from a woman in the hospital. As I was talking with her, I became completely broken and started to weep. Dr. Lewis did not know who was on the line with me, but he saw my tears and became broken himself. Here are two men in a little office, weeping together because God had given us tender hearts. This woman shared things about what she was going through and all of her fears

about it. The Spirit of God touched our hearts, and immediately the room was filled with brokenness. We were able to minister to her in her time of need with hearts that were tender.

Once, on hospital visitation, I met an 86-year-old man who looked desperate. It appeared that he just needed friendship and needed to be loved, so two of us stayed right by his bedside. Why? We were sensitive to his heart's need. And though we had never met this man before, we soon were weeping. He cried out to us with his eyes and his expressions. He needed kindness, and he needed to know that eternal state of forgiveness we experience by becoming a child of God.

"Be ye kind to kind one to another and tenderhearted." May God make our hearts sensitive to the needs of the hearts of others. It thrills the heart of Jesus Christ to see His people have tender hearts toward one another.

Share God's Portion from Your Life

At the end of a church service, try not to rush right out those doors to go home. Even if you have somewhere to go, take a moment and look at people. Go out of your way to show kindness; go out of your way to be tenderhearted.

If you notice that someone seems a little discouraged, shake his hand and share the love of God. Share the Lord's portion of life. Share love. Share the Lord's kindness. Share the Lord's compassion. Share the Lord's burden. Share the Lord's concern. Represent Jesus Christ and His eternal state of forgiveness. Tell that person, "You are so loved by God and I love you." You will never know how much that means to a person.

One of the great things about visiting people in hospitals or nursing homes is that it gives us an opportunity to enter into the needs of their hearts. We share with them the Lord's portion and completely forget ourselves.

When I minister the Lord's portion, I forget all about myself. The Lord ministers His portion to me, then I share the Lord's portion, and I completely forget about myself. As I begin to share God's kindness, God's tenderness, and God's forgiveness, the seeds that have been sown in my life come up bearing the fruit of Christ.

We visited a woman living at a rundown hotel and she said, "No one ever comes to see me. Why is it that no one from the church comes to see me?" She had listened to our radio show

and had asked to be visited. All she wanted was kindness. She just needed for someone to share God's love with her. She was not well, and she wasn't living in a nice place. It was a privilege and a blessing to go out and minister the Lord's portion to her. The Lord ministered Christ's portion to us through the Holy Spirit, and we ministered to this woman.

The Tears of a Tender Heart

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

Paul was a tenderhearted preacher. He would think of the churches at Ephesus, at Colosse, and at Corinth, and he would weep. He would pray for the needs of the people in these congregations and begin to cry. Day and night the tears would come—tears that longed for people's lives to be changed by Christ's eternal state of forgiveness.

"Oh, Lord, the people at Corinth are so confused. They are living in a state of confusion instead of the eternal state of forgiveness," Paul would pray. "Would you bless them and send Your love to help them?" Paul was so tenderhearted.

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept over the city of Jerusalem. He wept because He longed for people to receive God's forgiveness. His sacrifice at the Cross means that He will never charge us for what we have done. He will not make us pay for our guilt. His tender heart of forgiveness caused Him to take upon Himself everything that we had ever done wrong so that we could go free. He is so tenderhearted toward us that even if we should fail, He is quick to forgive us and restore us back to life and fellowship in an instant.

God never embarrasses us. I was thinking of mistakes I have made that the Lord helped me out of without embarrassment. I was thinking of how the Lord has always protected me with His eternal state of forgiveness through my little mistakes—just because He loves me. He has never embarrassed me, unlike the way we sometimes embarrass each other with little caustic remarks and careless comments. God never embarrasses us because He is kind and tenderhearted toward us.

I can remember times when I was in such need and I thought my heart would break, then, all of a sudden waves of love would surround me. I remember the times at two or three in the

morning when I had exhausted every means of natural power and human strength. Then, God, seemingly out of nowhere, would bring in waves of strength. God would give me a brand-new filling of His Holy Spirit, and I would just raise my hands in love to Jesus. Just like that, He would come through to shed abroad His love in my heart.

Chapter Three

FORGIVE AS CHRIST HAS FORGIVEN YOU

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Again, the Greek text of Ephesians 4:32 reveals something very important. The original text uses a word and construction that exhorts us to “live in a state of forgiving everyone for everything that they do.”

Consider the entire verse carefully: “Be ye kind....” In other words, initiate the love of God to others. “Be tenderhearted”—reveal the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit toward others’ needs. And, “forgiving one another”—always live in a state that forgives everyone for everything they have done and may yet do to you.

Paul’s instruction here is this: Live in an experiential state where you have so much kindness and so much love from God that you are

always forgiving others the very moment they do something against you, and even before they do. You live this way because you have a state of forgiveness already established through the forgiveness of God's tenderhearted kindness.

Do you realize that Jesus has already forgiven you for the sins you will commit tomorrow? He rests in His eternal state of forgiveness toward you. He is tenderhearted toward you, and He senses your need. He never wants to embarrass you. He never wants to frustrate you. He will never hurt or harm you.

Jesus Christ wants to build us up and edify us (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 14:19). He wants to love us personally, and He wants to shed His love abroad in our hearts (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 5:5). Through that, He wants us to experience the perfect peace of Isaiah 26:3.

No Surprises for Christ

Jesus has an attitude of forgiveness toward us *all* the time—He must, or else He could not have fellowship with us since we still have an old sin nature. He knows we will sin so He continues in a state of forgiveness to keep fellowship with us.

Not a single thing we do takes Him by sur-

prise. Nothing we can do will alter Christ's character of forgiveness. There is not a single thing that Christ does not forgive the born-again Christian. We are saved, and He has expressed an eternal state of forgiveness toward us. He forgives and forgets all the time.

Certainly, our sin interrupts our fellowship with God if we refuse to repent. It grieves His Spirit and wounds His love so that He cannot fellowship with us until we deal with our willful sins. Nevertheless, He has already forgiven us, and He still lives in that eternal state toward us.

On Calvary, Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus interceded for all of us at that moment, and the Father said, "I will forgive them." In that prayer, Christ asked God to forgive us for everything that we are ever going to do. The Father responded by allowing His only begotten Son to die on Calvary. "Through You, my Son, and according to the shedding of Your blood, I will do that. I will eternally forgive them."

From Forgiveness to Revival

God's character of forgiveness will stand in our behalf for the rest of our lives. Today, Jesus Christ has forgiven me. Tomorrow, He has al-

ready forgiven me. Next week, He has already forgiven me. This is why I can love Him. This is why I can trust Him. This is why I can praise Him. Christ has expressed an “eternal is” state of forgiveness that includes forgetfulness toward my sin. If I sin—and I will sin—it will grieve Him and wound Him. But once I rebound, my fellowship with Him is instantly restored. The state of forgiveness in my relationship with Him is eternal and precious.

This eternal state of forgiveness is the mark of revival. A revival reveals the Lord’s mind, the Lord’s kindness, the Lord’s tenderheartedness, and the Lord’s forgiveness. No one carries any grudges. No one bears resentment. No one harbors bitterness. No one worries about what the other one is doing. There is an eternal state of forgiveness and forgetfulness.

This is what God has toward us. And that is what He desires us to have toward one another.

CONCLUSION

Oh, if we could grasp the truth that God has an eternal provision of forgiveness! Before anyone does anything against me, I stand in God's eternal state of forgiveness toward him, so that when he does it, I have already forgiven him. And if he does it again, I can honestly and instantly forget it.

That is the Lord's attitude toward us, and we can do nothing more to others but what the Lord has done for us. It is the Lord's portion, and it was given to us so we can give it to others. This is a deep revelation.

If you are reading this and you have never been saved, then you must receive Christ in order to enter into this eternal state of forgiveness. Come as you are and receive Jesus into your heart. Invite Him to come into your life and He will do it. Then, you will experience His forgiveness forever.

If you are a Christian, enter into the Lord's

portion for you. Never take a single revelation of God for granted. Cherish everything you hear from His Word.

We can live in kindness. Pick out someone—a little child, an older person, a needy person—and express God's kindness toward him. Be tenderhearted and live in the eternal state of forgiveness. There, nothing anyone does will surprise you, because you are ready to forgive, to love, and to share God's tenderness and kindness.