

**“The Rest of the One Anothers”**

I have a friend whose son-in-law is one of the top executives for an international cosmetics company. I heard this story from him several years ago. It seems that a few years ago a cosmetic company sponsored a promotion in which people were asked to submit pictures and letters about the most beautiful women they knew. Thousands of letters and pictures poured in. But one particular letter from a young boy captured a lot of attention, and it was shown to the president of the company. From what he wrote it was obvious that the boy was from a broken home, staying with his father, & living in an old & run-down neighborhood. Writing about the woman, he said, “A beautiful woman lives down the street from me. I visit her every day. She makes me feel like the most important kid in the world. We play checkers and she listens to my problems. She understands me, and when I leave she yells out the door that she’s proud of me.” He enclosed her picture and wrote, “This picture shows you that she is the most beautiful woman.”

Intrigued, the president asked to see her picture. His secretary handed him a photograph of a smiling, toothless woman, well-advanced in years, sitting in a wheelchair. Her sparse gray hair was pulled back in a bun, & the wrinkles on her face seemed to fade away beneath the twinkle in her eyes. Smiling, the president said, “We can’t use this entry. It would show the world that our products aren’t necessary to be beautiful.” I think he’s right. There’s a beauty, an attractiveness that’s completely unrelated to physical appearance. There’s a kindness, a gentleness, a concern, a love that can be seen and experienced in the lives of those around us.

Listen to this letter written to Ann Landers. "Dear Ann, I'm a 46-year-old woman, divorced, with 3 grown children. After several months of chemotherapy following a mastectomy for breast cancer, I was starting to put my life back together when my doctor called with the results of my last checkup. They had found more cancer, and I was devastated. "My relatives had not been supportive. I was the first person in the family to have cancer, and they didn't know how to behave toward me. They tried to be kind, but I had the feeling they were afraid that it was contagious. They called on the phone to see how I was doing, but kept their distance. And that really hurt.

"Last Saturday I headed for the Laundromat. You see the same people there almost every week. We exchange greetings, and make small talk. So I pulled into the parking lot, determined not to look depressed, but my spirits were really low. While taking my laundry out of the car, I looked up and saw a man, one of the regulars, leaving with his bundle. He smiled and said, 'Good morning. How are you today?' Suddenly I lost control of myself and blurted out, 'This is the worst day of my life! I have more cancer!' Then I began to cry. "He put his arms around me and just let me sob. Then he said, 'I understand. My wife has been through it, too.' After a few minutes I felt better, stammered out my thanks, and proceeded on with my laundry.

"About 15 minutes later, here he came back with his wife. Without saying a word, she walked over and hugged me. Then she said, 'I've been there, too. Feel free to talk to me. I know what you're going through.' "Ann, I can't tell you how much that meant to me. Here was this total stranger, taking her time to give me emotional support and courage to face the future at a time when I was ready to give up. "Oh, I hope God gives me a chance to do

for someone else what that wonderful woman and her husband did for me. Meanwhile, Ann, please let your readers know that even though there are a lot of hard-hearted people in this world, there are some incredibly generous and loving ones, too."

There are a lot of different kinds of people, aren't there? The apostle Paul wrote these words in his letter to the Ephesians in 4:29-31: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" We see people all around us bitter and angry: angry at the world because it hasn't given them enough; angry at God because they think He hasn't treated them fairly; angry at their spouses because marriage is not everything they expected it to be; angry at their children; angry at their neighbors; angry at their job. Angry! So Paul gives a survival message that says, "If you want to make it, you can't live like that because it'll eat you alive." Originally when I prepared this series last spring I actually had included at least three other sermons in it. But since I have to get along due to the holiday season coming up I am going to put those final three into one message and Ange will wrap it all up next week with our final GPS message, "Carry One Another's Burden's". Paul said, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice".

Then in the very next verse he gives the antidote. To get rid of your hostility, your anger, your unwholesome words, do this, - "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" Ephesians 4:32. Did you catch that? The 3 essential ingredients in getting rid of hostility and anger are: #1, be kind to one

another; #2, be compassionate towards one another; #3, forgive each other. Three rapid fire admonitions, three coordinates to plug into our God Positioning System.

**First, "Be kind to one another."** Kindness is almost a lost art today, isn't it? So many people are rude and self-centered, worried about themselves, and not worried very much about others. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Titus 3:3, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Sounds familiar, doesn't it? And Paul even includes himself. He said, "We were hated and we hated one another. That's the way the world behaves." Then he goes on in vs. 4, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." Did you hear that? It is only because of the kindness and mercy of God that we are saved. If God reacted to us the way we react to one another, He would have washed his hands of us long ago. But instead, He reached out to save us.

A missionary returning after serving many years in the jungles of New Guinea was asked, "What was it like? Tell us what you found there." "Found? I found a mission field that looked more hopeless than if I had been sent into a jungle of tigers." "What do you mean?" "The people there were so fierce and degraded that they seemed utterly devoid of moral sense. If a mother was carrying her little baby and the child was crying and wouldn't stop, she would throw it into the ditch and let it die. If a man saw his own father break his leg, he would just leave him to suffer by himself. They had no compassion whatever. They didn't even know what the word meant." "Well, what were you able to do? Did you preach to them?"

"No, not at first. I thought it better to show them my faith by my works! When I saw a baby crying, I picked it up and consoled it. When I saw a man with a broken leg, I sought to mend it. When I found people distressed and hungry, I took them in, comforted and fed them. Finally they began to ask, 'What does this mean? Why are you doing this for us?' Then I had my chance. I told them about Jesus, & many of them came to know and love Jesus, too." Paul said, "Be kind to one another because God has been kind to us." You cannot do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late. (Jeff Stratton 2010)

**Secondly, Paul then says, "Be compassionate to one another."** The word "compassion" simply means that your feelings become a part of my life, and I begin to share and understand what you feel, and what is going on inside of you. Listen to this true story about what happened to a 10-year-old Jewish boy in Poland during WWII. For generations his family had been a part of this small village. And when the Nazis occupied Poland SS troops came to the village and rounded up all the Jews there for execution. But first they were forced to dig their own graves – a long shallow ditch. Then they were lined up along the ditch and machine-gunned. The impact of the bullets knocked their bodies into the ditch and the Nazis shoveled dirt on top of them. But none of the bullets had hit this little boy. Splattered with the blood of his parents, when they fell into the ditch he fell with them, pretending to be dead. The layer of dirt that was shoveled on top of him was so thin that it didn't prevent air from getting to him, so he could still breathe.

The Nazis left, and when darkness fell several hours later this 10-year-old boy clawed his way out of the grave. With blood and dirt caked to his little body he made his way to

the nearest house and begged for help. Recognizing him as one of the Jewish boys marked for death by the SS the woman screamed at him to go away, and slammed the door in his face. He was turned away at the next house as well, and the one after that also. In each case their fear of the Nazis overpowered any feelings of compassion they might have had. Dirty, bloody and shivering the little boy went on. Then something inside guided him to say something very strange for a Jewish boy to say. When the next family he approached opened their door he cried out, "Don't you recognize me? I'm the Jesus you say you love." After a startled pause the woman who stood in the doorway swept him into her arms and kissed him. From that day on that family cared for him as if he were one of their very own. "Be kind & compassionate to one another..." Remember, it is Jesus Christ who said, "Whatever you did for these..., you did for me." [Matthew 25:40]

That's where it starts. In a family torn by dissension and argument - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." In a business where the general rule seems to be "dog eat dog" - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." In a community and nation where one race is pitted against another, and tolerance is derided - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In a world that is torn asunder by deep and long-standing hatreds that never seem to be assuaged - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." We long for peace, real peace, lasting peace. But I'm convinced that there will be no such peace, as long as the Prince of Peace is ignored or unknown.

**Finally, Paul said, to get rid of malice, brawling, slander "Forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"** The third item in Paul's survival message is to forgive

each other, and I believe he had a reason for putting this last, because I don't think we can really forgive somebody until we have learned to be kind and compassionate toward them.

This is a true story told by the Wycliff Bible Society. The wife of a Zulu chief happened to attend a meeting of Christians & heard for the very first time in her life about Jesus. The message of a God who loves us & forgives our sins was something new and wonderful for her to consider. She had never heard of such a God before. And it wasn't long until she became a Christian, too.

When her husband learned of this he angrily forbade her, on pain of death, ever to attend a Christian meeting again. However, eager to hear more about Jesus, she dared to go, and when her husband found out what she had done he met her on the trail and beat her so savagely that he left her for dead. But it wasn't long until curiosity got the better of him and he went back to look for her. She was not on the trail where he had left her. But he did see broken twigs and other signs to indicate where she had crawled away. Following them he finally found her lying under a bush. Cruelly, he asked, "And just what is your Jesus Christ doing for you now?" She opened her eyes, and looking at him, said gently, "He is helping me to forgive you!" Paul said, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" "Now you forgive one another just as God, in Christ, has forgiven you."

There is a great deal of talk these days in America about what the true God is really like. People think all the gods of all the religions are the same. We need to SHOW them the God of the Bible is a God of love, a God of mercy, and a God of kindness. He is a God who loves people so much that He sent His one and only Son into this world to suffer and

die in agony on the cross so our sins could be forgiven. That's the kind of loving God we need to show this world.