



To Love As Brethren I ~ Kindness

Happy Sabbath to everyone!

This week, we are continuing an examination of a passage from the Spirit of Prophecy that we read last month, which contained a phrase that I have never heard discussed outside of the CSDA Church. The idea that we are “identical with Christ” because His Spirit lives in us was not something I had heard mentioned even once in my years as a mainstream Seventh-day Adventist, although it is such a powerful idea, and one that ought to be a subject of our deep contemplation as our sanctification progresses.

That is not the only noteworthy expression found in that passage, however, and I would like to read the first and last part of it for our recollection:

“‘All ye are brethren.’ (Matthew 23:8) As brethren we are identified with Christ and with one another. As brethren we are *identical with Christ*, and through His grace identical with one another. [...] Christ lives in us, and this draws heart to heart. We are led to love as brethren, to be *kind, tender, courteous* in daily service, having hearts that can feel another’s woe.” [*Letters and Manuscripts, Vol. 14, Letter 210, emphases added*]

Almost as impressive as the way the selection begins is the way it ends, describing the natural result of the in-dwelling presence of the Savior. Because heart is drawn to heart, there is *Philadelphia*, there is brotherly love, and this is described in three aspects: kindness, tenderness, and courtesy. As similar as these concepts are, I believe that each deserves its own particular focus, and so I am calling today’s study, “To Love as Brethren Part 1 – Kindness.”

When I think of the way this word is used, I find that it is essentially the same as one of the definitions for grace. This term, grace, has several applicable definitions. One of the ways I find it used in the Scriptures is as a restoration of free will that Yahweh gives to sinners so that they may choose to serve Him despite the carnality of the natural man. In other words, even though human beings in their natural state are separated from Yahweh, His display of love for us opens up a ray of light that, if followed, results in the born-again experience. One verse that demonstrates this is found here: “*And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from Yahweh our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.*” (Ezra 9:8)

More commonly, though, grace has been defined by the phrase “unmerited favor,” or benefits and blessings that we do not earn. I find these two definitions harmonize quite well, and this latter one a perfect description of kindness.

What I would like to do today is quite simple, and not particularly lengthy. I would like to go through some key verses of the Bible where kindness is mentioned, to see their context, and to learn in a very practical way what it looks like when Yahshua’s Spirit in us draws heart to heart and inspires brotherly love, a central attribute of the 144,000.

The word “kindness” appears in the KJV Bible 48 times, with 42 of those being found in the Old Testament. I like to point out numbers like this, because so often we hear the idea, especially from students of the new theology, that the Old Testament reveals a distant, less caring God than the New. It is true that seeing the world through the lens of Christ’s life, sacrifice, and resurrection provides clarity about the nature of the Father. This does not, however, mean that Yahweh Himself has changed. The same loving God that sent Yahshua to us led the Israelites through the wilderness, established the system of sacrifices, and inspired the words that were written down by the prophets. The system of types reveals to us the kindness, tenderness, and courtesy of our Father that is later fulfilled in the events and prophecies that the apostles recorded. As Solomon said, “[there is no new thing under the sun,](#)” (Ecc 1:9) and the Spirit provides us with wisdom to recognize this.

So what does the Bible, and largely the Old Testament, say about kindness? I won’t quote all of the nearly fifty verses that mention it, but there are some key ones, and they form an overall picture that I find to be impressive and inspiring.

In Genesis 24, a young woman named Rebekah was chosen as a wife for Isaac, Abraham’s son, in a manner that is symbolic of the Church being chosen for Yahshua, the Son of Yahweh. Abraham, who represents the Father – in fact, whose name means “Father of many,” and whose original name Abram meant “Exalted Father,” sends a chief servant named Eliezer, on a task to find his son’s bride. The name Eliezer means “El is help,” and so we have a record from the first Book of the Bible that the exalted Father sends a helper to find his son a wife. This should sound very familiar to the Christian reader, if just a little bit of knowledge is inserted.

But now, how shall this helper, this agent of the Father, recognize the right woman? Should she have great outward beauty? The Scripture doesn’t say anything about that. Must she come from a wealthy and respected family? The Exalted Father of Many had riches enough, and did not require an impressive dowry. Should she be clever and wise? This is always a good thing, but not, in this case at least, the defining characteristic of the ideal woman. We read a prophetic test that the servant administered, as he prayed the following: “[And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, ‘Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink;’ and she shall say, ‘Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also,’ let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.](#)” (Gen 24:14)

When Eliezer meets Rebekah later in the chapter, this very thing comes to pass; in fact, it is written that she “hasted” to draw water for both Abraham’s servant and his camels, doing so quickly and eagerly. What the servant was looking for was a character that showed kindness to men and to animals, who took the time to supply the wants of those in need, and who did so willingly. This, in turn was “kindness” to Abraham himself, who could be assured that his son was matched with a worthy companion.

The very same image is raised in the Book of Proverbs, which describes the virtuous woman, whose “[price is far above rubies.](#)” (Pro 31:10) It says, “[She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the](#)

law of kindness.” It says, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised.” (Pro 31:26, 30) This eager willingness to serve is later praised among the servants of Yahshua, “for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2Gor 9:7)

In this passage from Proverbs, as in our opening quote, we see a connection between kindness and the knowledge of Yahweh. We see that a consistent caring for the needs and comfort of others is a fruit of the very Spirit that identifies and inhabits the Bride of Yahshua as Paul observes. The Almighty crafts every living soul. Every life is unique and precious in His sight; how could it be otherwise, then, that those who are like Him in character should seek the best good of others? Agape is expressed in kindness. Divine love is manifest as the choice to do what is best for those in our spheres of influence, whether or not they deserve it. Now, this does not mean that we seek to meet every fleeting desire of those around us. Often, especially among the unconverted, wants and needs are in conflict. We, who would do them the kindness of being their servants, must sometimes deny, and even rebuke, when such actions might effectively point the way to righteousness, and perhaps repentance.

We have read of Rahab, who, being an inhabitant of Jericho, hid the two Hebrew spies that were sent to help the Israelites obtain victory over the people of the land that would be their inheritance. By faith, Rahab had come to believe in Yahweh. She had heard about the Exodus from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the military victories they had won, and she knew that their God (whom she acknowledged as the Ruler of Heaven and earth – Jos 2:11) had purposed to give Israel the region in which Jericho lay. As a result, she protected those sent to scout out the city’s defenses, and said to them, “Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by Yahweh, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token; and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” (Jos 2:12, 13)

Here is an example of the Golden Rule, spoken by Yahshua and many others, expressed by the exchange of favors in times of need. I also find it interesting that there is a parallel here with the Exodus directly, in that the invading Israelites would identify and avoid attacking Rahab’s house, because she affixed a red string to her window, just as the Israelites in Egypt avoided the avenging angel by marking the posts around their doors with the red blood of a lamb. Rahab thereafter marries into the nation of Israel, her husband being named Salmon, and she becomes the mother of Boaz who later becomes the husband of Ruth. Speaking of which...

Twice in the short Book of Ruth there is a blessing pronounced because of kindness. In the first instance, Ruth 2:20, Naomi blesses Yahweh for arranging the meeting between Ruth and Boaz. In the second, Ruth 3:10, Boaz blesses Ruth, because she has followed the Law of Israel in seeking out a kinsman of her late husband to marry, rather than going after a younger prospect.

I have said that the Old Testament uses the word “kindness” almost fifty times. This does not mean it is applied to the actions of human beings very often. King David is perhaps the one most often depicted showing this virtue, and this is not a coincidence, considering he is described as being after Yahweh’s own heart. (1Sam 13:14) What we do find, though, is this pattern... not immediately obvious, but very clear once pointed out. A significant portion of the Old Testament is dedicated to outlining the history of those who become ancestors of the Messiah... and within His lineage we see these three women who are shown to be virtuous wives – Rebekah, Rahab and Ruth. Each of their names begins with R... but the most important thing they have in common is that they were renowned for their kindness. This is what led them to their husbands. This is what caused the pivotal events in their lives. This is what qualified them for kinship with Yahshua, as even His own spiritual bride must be qualified.

In Yahshua's bloodline, kindness seems to be a key characteristic, and certainly on His Father's side there is love, agape, expressed kindness, personified. This is no trivial matter. Old and New, prophecy and fulfillment, point out the importance of kindness to the divine character, the development of a chosen people, and the redemption of humanity.

As one would expect, the Books of Psalms and Proverbs mentions kindness several times. "Blessed be Yahweh, for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city." (Psalm 31:21) "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of Yahweh endureth forever. Praise ye Yahweh." (Psalm 117:2)

Isaiah writes on Yahweh's behalf, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Yahweh thy Redeemer." (Isa 54:8)

Jonah, a most interesting case, is angry with Yahweh, resentful because of the mercy that He shows to gentiles, complaining that his prophecy did not come to pass as proclaimed, "And he prayed unto Yahweh, and said, 'I pray thee, O Yah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil [the disaster pronounced upon Nineveh].'" (Jonah 4:2)

From the New Testament, I would like to share with you a little discussed aspect of the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. In this lesson, the word "kindness" is not used, but it is very much on display. We all know the main points here, so I will skip to the very end. The son, having wasted his inheritance, returns home in desperation, pleading with his father to make him just a servant, and pay him a wage enough to scrape out a meager living.

"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to be merry." (Luke 15:22-24)

The original title of this study was "The Best Robe." I decided to make it something more obvious, and to indicate that it would be the first of three parts, but the imagery here is very effective. The younger son did not deserve this treatment. In fact, most people would not understand the father's kindness. The older son certainly did not – we read that when he learned of his sibling's reception, he became angry at what he perceived as favoritism. The returning son was given the best of clothing, a ring that indicated the father's approval, and an expensive meal of celebration. That is unmerited favor, an undeserved benefit.

Most of you here know that my father recently passed away, and that I have a younger brother. Whenever I read this parable I try to imagine how I would feel if he (who in reality is a very responsible person) had wasted away our father's inheritance, and then turned to me for help. I imagine that I would feel a very human reaction; I think that I, also, would be very angry at the waste... That is the natural response, I suppose. But then, I think that I would realize there would be time for anger, and rebuke, and the "I told you so" speech later. Because of *Philadelphia*, because of brotherly love, I would be happy that he, who I thought might be dead, was alive, and healthy and home. I would probably put him to work earning back some of what he had spent... but first, I would rejoice, and maybe even host a feast, that he was back. That is judgment mixed with, and overcome by, kindness. As it is written, "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:13)

I have said that I wish to examine the practical aspects of kindness, and so I want to touch on one more thing before we close.

There are some in the Church of Yahshua who are bowed down with infirmities. I myself have been experiencing some not insignificant challenges to my health. It might be reasonable to ask, just as the older

brother in that parable might be reasonably perplexed, “How can this be in a Church of miracles and perfect faith?” How can this be, with a God who is omni-benevolent (all loving) and omni-potent (all powerful)? I have heard, several times, the atheist’s argument against the God of the Bible. They say, “There is evil in the world, and great suffering. Since that is the case, if God is all-powerful, He cannot be all loving. On the other hand, if He is all loving, then He cannot be all powerful, or He would prevent pain and death.”

I understand the argument. It makes perfect sense, except that it does not account for the existence of sin. Sin is a mystery, but it is also a consequence that arises from the exercise of free will. Because of sin, angels chose to rebel. Because of sin, humans choose to be selfish, to be unkind, and to harm one another. Because of sin, nature itself has become dangerous to mankind, and so ultimately even natural disasters, diseases, and fatal accidents are the end result of the presence of sin in the universe.

The poisonous nature of sin is that direct sinners are not the only ones that suffer. Adam and Eve sinned, and every one of their descendants must deal with the consequences. Yahshua addressed this in a passage from Luke’s Gospel: “There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Yahshua answering said unto them, ‘Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’” (Luke 13:1-5)

The lesson here is, I think, very difficult for many people to understand, just as the father’s kindness in the parable of the Prodigal Son may be difficult for some to accept. Creation Seventh Day Adventists have taken to heart the 9/10 rule, the idea that 9 out of every 10 events that we experience, whether good or bad, is something that invited or could have prevented, by our choices. As we grow in grace and knowledge, and make fewer decisions out of ignorance, we can maximize the likelihood of blessings, and eliminate most curses. The fact, though, is that 10 percent is still a lot when the impact of these events are significant.

A lot can happen during 10 percent of a lifetime, and many great pleasures and terrible tragedies can be the result of but a moment. We are not immune to disease, unless our work requires us to be, nor to injury and pain, unless we are specifically guarded against such things for a divine purpose. The conclusion is simple. As Christians, as born-again believers, we know that we have great blessings ahead, and in the end, everlasting life. We are not, however, in glorified bodies yet. Because we live in a world of sin, a world of suffering and death, we are not exempt from the peaks and valleys of humanity. We know that as long as our Father has a work for us, we are protected from a great many things, and as we believe in Yah’s promises, the angels are strengthened to defend us, but what we receive – what we are permitted to receive – through these protective barriers we accept with humility and grace, trusting that our Father is both all-powerful and all-loving. We know that He is all-wise as well, and does all things for the greatest possible good. We see from the Book of Job that much is hidden from human eyes... nevertheless, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” (Job 1:22)

At no time in human history were the servants of Yahweh free of suffering. In no generation did the perfection of faith lead to the comfort of body, or even mind. The reformer Martin Luther, today, would probably be diagnosed with depression, and perhaps several mental illnesses. Paul had infirmities for which his prayers for healing were gently denied. The Pioneers were touched with illnesses and stresses that claimed their lives early in several notable cases. We might we ask, “Why was the kindness of Yahweh not expressed in relief from discomfort? Could there have been a weakness in their faith?” We do not know the degrees to which they individually claimed the promises of Heaven, but we know that inspiration has held them up as examples to follow, even as our knowledge of the Father and Son has grown over time.

We do not know, firsthand, the experiences of any other person, and must be careful of presumption when attempting to comfort those who mourn, but as much as it is possible for us, we are to reveal the kindness of Yahweh to others and relive their suffering as much as we can. The Scriptures say that in Christ, we are the righteousness of Yahweh. (2Cor 5:21) This means that we are His love, we are His mercy, and we are His kindness. Parables like the Good Samaritan were written to show us our duty, to demonstrate the character that we have inherited from the Father and Son. What we know, what we understand, that we can accomplish. This is sanctification, and how we grow ever more divine in character, imitating Yahshua, and those in His service, to heal those sick who may be healed, and to raise those dead who may be raised.

Let us close, then, with this passage from Peter we have sometimes called the “Ladder of Sanctification,” which includes the subject of this study: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness agape. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah.” (2Pet 1:4-8)