

## Kindness & Goodness

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by Wayne Goff

### Kindness

“Kindness” (NKJV) or “Gentleness” (KJV) is rendered elsewhere as “good.” In the Greek New Testament, the original word only appears in the writings of Paul and is joined to such words as “*philanthropia*” (Titus 3:4) and “*longsuffering*” (Rom. 2:4), and is used opposite the “*severity*” of God (Rom. 11:22). R.C. Trench says of this kindness: “it is one pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing there all which would have been harsh and austere” [*Synonyms of the New Testament*, par. 63, p. 233]. Likewise, Plummer on 2 Corinthians 6:6 says that kindness in men is “the sympathetic kindliness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease, and shrinks from giving pain” [William Barclay, *Flesh & Spirit*, p. 97].

When “*kindness*” is used of Christ it describes that personality trait which received the penitent woman (Lk. 7:37-50) who wiped his feet with her tears, who dried them with her hair, and who anointed His feet with fragrant oil. Jesus’ “*kindness*” forgave this woman in her penitence and told her to “*go in peace.*” This is true kindness — not that it ignores sin or condones it, but a kindness which seeks to forgive wrong whenever the opportunity arises. William Barclay commented “It is in this kindness that Christians must forgive one another, and that forgiveness is patterned on nothing other and nothing less than God’s forgiveness of ourselves. ... (Eph. 4:32)” [p. 101].

The outgrowth of the Spirit in our hearts and lives is this goodness of heart which seeks to forgive others, which has no hardness or harshness to drive away people, and which leads our offenders to believe that we will easily forgive.

### Goodness

“Goodness” describes a moral quality in those whose character or constitution is beneficial in effect. It is very much like “kindness” in that it seeks to help others, but it is very different from “kindness” because “goodness” may seek to include the sterner methods of accomplishing good.

For example, Christ’s “*goodness*” can be seen in His cleansing of the Temple, though His method may seem **harsh** to some, Matt. 21:12-13. Likewise, he was expressing the goodness of character in denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:13-29) though His words are **very strong**. Yet in these examples we see the desire to bring about good through more drastic means, and Christians may well emulate Jesus out of the same “*goodness*” of heart.

Goodness will lead the sincere preacher to “*reprove, rebuke and exhort*” (2 Tim. 4:2) his listeners because he wishes to bring about in them the needed reform which is for their best. Goodness prompts the Christian to go to the wayward soul and say or do the thing which may help lead that lost one to repentance.

Goodness is also described as a **benevolent quality**. In contrast to justice, William Barclay wrote “*Justice*, they say, is the quality which gives a man what is due to him; *goodness* is the quality which is out to do far more than that, and which desires to give a man all that is to his benefit and to his help” [*Flesh & Spirit*, p. 105]. He also went on to say that the great characteristic of goodness “is the generosity which gives a man what he never could have earned” [p. 106].

May we all learn to practice what is good for others and provide for their needs and our blessing!

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