

**Particular
Details
contd.
Kindness**

We have seen four of Paul’s detailed concerns. 1. Telling the truth. 2. Anger. 3. Stealing. 4. Talk. There are two more. He goes on to deal with kindness ^{☐1}, and then a group that we can call the common sins of the world ^{☐2}.

^{☐1} 4:31-5:2
^{☐2} 5:3-7

5. **Kindness** ^{☐1}. Paul is still dealing with some of the details in his appeal for Christian godliness. He continues: ‘*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and shouting and slander be put away from you with all malice* ^{☐2}. *And become kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, as God in Christ forgave you*’ ^{☐3}.

^{☐1} 4:31-5:2
^{☐2} 4:31
^{☐3} 4:32

As so often he puts the matter negatively ^{☐1} and then positively ^{☐2}, and then follows up what he has said with arguments and reasons ^{☐3}.

^{☐1} 4:31
^{☐2} 4:32a
^{☐3} 4:32b-5:2

• **Negatively – putting things away**

First comes the negative ^{☐1}. The Christian is to put away bitterness (getting a sour spirit because of grievances and grudges) and wrath and anger and shouting and slander. They must be got rid of; so must every kind of malice. These words are only too easy to understand! Paul uses more than one word for anger because there are different kinds of anger and people show anger in different ways. Some are violent in their manner; other are deeply resentful. Shouting is noisy; slander can be quiet.

^{☐1} 4:31

• **Do it!**

We notice Paul does not tell us to pray about these things. Nor does he tell us we need a deliverance ministry to have them cast out of our lives. Nor does he think we need counselling. He just tells us to take action. Do it! – he says to us. Let these things be put away.

• **Positively – habits to cultivate**

Then he becomes more positive. ‘And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other...’. Again, the words are not difficult to understand. We must positively get into the habit of daily persistent kindness. The fruit of the Spirit is ... kindness. If we are being led by the Spirit we are being led into kindness. We are to become compassionate, tender-hearted people.

We are to become forgiving people. All the great saints of God have had to learn this. Joseph had to forgive his brothers. David had to forgive Saul. The prophets had to forgive their persecutors. Job had to forgive his three friends. Jesus had to forgive Judas. It means we freely forget what people have done to us, and how they have hurt us.

• **God’s kindness to us – a reminder and something to imitate**

He reminds us of God’s kindness towards us. When God asks us to be kind to others He is only asking us to treat others in the way in which He has dealt with us. You are to be ‘forgiving ... as God in Christ forgave you’. Christ has come to us and said ‘Your sins are forgiven’. He forgave us all our sins. After Jesus has shown us such love, how can we now hold on to our animosities towards others? It does not matter how terribly they sinned against us. We have to forgive.

Ephesians 5:1–2 develop the point further. ‘*And become, therefore, imitators of God as beloved children*’ ^{☐1}. *And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God*’ ^{☐2}.

^{☐1} 5:1
^{☐2} 5:2

• **God made us His children**

God made us His beloved children. We are to become imitators of God as beloved children [☩]¹. We mimic Him, copy Him, by the joy we have in our great salvation. We do to others what He had done for us. A child learns to be like his parents. To be a ‘child’ of God is to represent God in this world by being like Him. The new person is created to be like God in true righteousness [☩]².

[☩]¹ 5:1

[☩]² 4:24

• **Christ has loved us**

Christ has loved us, so we walk in love in a way that corresponds to what Christ has done for us. This means that the more we feel Christ’s love, the easier it is to love other people. We were so undeserving. There was nothing that was worthy of the love of Jesus. Maybe you see nothing deserving in the other person. Why should I love him? Why should I love her? He does not deserve my love. But you did not deserve Jesus’ love! Love is not only for those who deserve it! There is nothing specially wonderful about loving those who are nice to you. Jesus did not die for His friends. He died for His enemies. He died ‘for’ us. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. This is the love of God, the kind of love that God wants us to show to everyone everywhere.

• **Christ’s practical and sacrificial love**

Christ’s love was practical and sacrificial. He gave Himself up for us. Love is largely a matter of giving, yielding, surrendering. What self-surrender was involved when Jesus set His face to go to the cross. He was a real man and so shrunk from suffering, as we all do. ‘If it be possible, take this cup from me’, He prayed. If there was any other way that He could go to save the human race, He would have preferred to go another way. But there was no other way. The human race could not be saved without the cross. It was the Father’s will for His Son. The way of love for men and women involved terrible self-surrender. But Jesus was willing to do it! He said ‘I shall give way to what I know has to be done. Not My will but Your will be done’. Love is doing what has to be done for others, no matter what it costs us.

• **Christ’s sacrifice pleased God**

Christ’s sacrifice pleased God. It was a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God [☩]¹. Christ’s sacrifice pleased God, and when we sacrifice ourselves so as to be kind to others we too shall be giving a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.

[☩]¹ 5:2

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