



Reflection for September 12

By Dan Dick



"Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then, each of us will be accountable to God." (Romans 14:10-12)

I am a word nerd. I love to know the original meaning and derivation of words we use all the time and take for granted. Two words from the Greek come to mind as I reflect on the passage from Romans: kindness and gentleness. Both kindness and gentleness are listed by Paul as fruit of the Spirit – those qualities and characteristics of Christian communities who are truly guided by God's Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, the words we translate as kindness are richer and more nuanced in the Greek. Καλοσ?νη (kalosýni) more accurately and fully translates as humaneness, civility, and unconditional benevolence. Χρηστ?ς

(chréstos) most fully means “gracious reaching out” or welcoming acceptance. Gentleness - Ευγένεια (evgéneia) – means “to treat as blood,” or to embrace and regard as family. Together kindness and gentleness are outward and visible signs that the Holy Spirit is working within us to extend unconditional love, abundant grace, and non-judgmental regard to every one of God’s children on the earth. Ultimately, each of us will answer to God, but on this earth, in this time, we simply love one another with true kindness and gentleness.

With so much unhappiness and conflict in our world, why would we ever want to add to it? Judgmentalism, condemnation, insult, mockery, blame, accusation – where do these things lead us? They injure, they divide, they shame and disrespect. This is not the behavior of true Christians. Our God is the God of love; God is love. Unless we can truly love – share the fruit of the Spirit of kindness and gentleness – we will never fully experience the grace of God in our own lives.

Prayer: Wondrous and loving God, forgive us when we fail to be kind and gentle with one another. Transform our hearts of bitterness and exclusion that we might find a place for every one of your beloved children. Destroy our inclination to judge and condemn, replacing these tendencies with a passion for loving kindness, forgiveness, and hospitality. Bow our knees and raise our tongues in songs of praise to you. We pray humbly in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of

standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God’s grace and blessings, God’s challenge and healthy discomfort, God’s Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.

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