Kinds of Kindness

Phil EuBank · Repentance For the Rest Of Us · Romans 2:1-4; Romans 2:5; John 21:15-17

AT A GLANCE

In the second week of 'Repentance for the Rest of Us,' picking up after Vince Vitale's opening message, Phil EuBank reframes Romans 2:4: God does not withhold kindness until we fix ourselves; his kindness, patient and present-tense, is the very thing that makes repentance possible. This matters because a culture that has hollowed kindness into mere non-offense has manufactured a repentance that costs nothing, while God's kindness cost him his Son.

- Kindness that costs nothing produces repentance that costs nothing; God's kindness, by contrast, cost him his own Son.
- God's kindness isn't waiting at a finish line for you to improve—it's present tense, active in your worst week right now.
- Judging others for sins you don't struggle with while excusing the ones you do is self-condemnation, not righteousness.

> *"Fear will change you for now. But kindness will change you for good."*

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Romans 2:1-4 — [1]So do you think that you can judge those other people? You are wrong. You too are guilty of sin. You judge them, but you do the same things they do. So when you judge them, you are really condemning yourself. [2]God judges all who do such things, and we know his judgment is right. [3]And since you do the same things as those people you judge, surely you understand that God will punish you too. How could you think you would be able to escape his judgment? [4]God has been kind to you. He has been very patient, waiting for you to change. But you think nothing of his kindness. Maybe you don't understand that God is kind to you so that you will decide to change your lives. (ERV)

Romans 2:5 — But you are so stubborn! You refuse to change. So you are making your own punishment greater and greater. You will be punished on the day when God will show his anger. On that day everyone will see how right God is to judge people. (ERV)

John 21:15-17 — [15]When they finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these other men love me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love

> you." Then Jesus said to him, "Take care of my lambs. " [16]Again Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Then Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." [17]A third time Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you!" Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." (ERV)

The argument

Kindness Without Cost Produces Repentance Without Cost — a culture that reduced kindness to not being mean built a matching cheap repentance

Phil EuBank traces how 'be kind, rewind' morphed into random-acts-of-kindness stickers and finally into a purely passive virtue—kindness as never making anyone uncomfortable, its opposite now simply disagreement. He points to bumper stickers reading 'I'm one of the good ones, I bought this before we knew' as performative gestures that cost nothing and change nothing. Citing R.T. Kendall—'I would define a maturing Christian as closing the time gap between sin and repentance'—he relocates repentance from a one-time decision into the daily calendar: the years between mishandling money and finally being honest, the relationships left to die because the conversation never happened.

> **Insight —** *A cheapened definition of kindness will always produce a cheapened definition of repentance, because the two rise and fall together.*

God's Kindness Is Not a Deadline, It's a Present Tense — on 'presume' and 'leads' in Romans 2:4

EuBank isolates two words in the passage. 'Presume' means assuming something about someone without ever checking it with them—the substance of the judgment Paul indicts. 'Leads,' he notes, is written in the present active indicative in the original language, meaning it is ongoing, not scheduled, not waiting on your calendar: 'It's not waiting at the finish line. It's not waiting for you to get your life figured out.' He adds that forbearance and patience aren't God being merely nice but God being deliberately slow—'the time that he is buying for you and me at his own expense'—a being outside time stepping into time to be patient with people inside it.

> **Insight —** *God's kindness toward you is not a future reward for improvement; it is happening in the middle of your life right now.*

Two Kinds of Kindness Sustain Every Life — common grace and prevenient grace

EuBank names two categories scripture uses for God's kindness. The first, common or general grace, belongs to everyone regardless of faith—sunrise, breath, seasons, 'we are swimming in an ocean of kindness all the time.' The second, prevenient grace, works ahead of a person, anticipating a need before they know they have it: the song that meant nothing to someone else

but detonated something in you, the friend's hard word you weren't ready for, the unplanned event God didn't cause but will still use. 'It's the kind of kindness that goes out ahead of you… it works on you before you even know it's working.'

> **Insight —** *Grace often arrives disguised as ordinary life, working on us long before we notice we needed it.*

Kindness Outperforms Fear Because It Doesn't Just Produce Compliance — the two charcoal fires of John 18 and John 21

EuBank observes that the same rare word for 'charcoal fire' appears only twice in John—once where Peter denies Jesus three times warming himself in the courtyard, and again on the beach after the resurrection, where Jesus builds an identical fire on purpose and cooks breakfast before the hard conversation happens. Jesus asks 'Do you love me?' three times, one for each denial, and John notes Peter was grieved—this was not comfortable or fast. Yet Jesus doesn't exile Peter; he assigns him: 'Feed my sheep.' EuBank's conclusion: 'Fear-based religion doesn't produce better people. It produces better hiding… Fear will change you for now. But kindness will change you for good.'

> **Insight —** *Real kindness never skips the hard conversation; it hosts it, so confrontation and restoration happen in the same breath.*

Wrath Mishandled Becomes Either Denial Or Self-Appointment — Paul's diagnosis that judging others is self-condemnation, and the true cost of kindness

EuBank names two common mishandlings of divine wrath: sanding the edges off God until he's 'warm but incapable,' or keeping the wrath but relocating it onto ourselves as enforcer—the tweet, the comment section, the group text about a friend never present for it. His tell: 'we are usually most wrathful, vengeful, and angry about the sins that we don't struggle with… and endlessly patient with the ones that we do.' He notes Paul uses the same word for 'storing up' whether it's treasure or wrath—everyone is making a deposit somewhere. The gospel's answer: 'God didn't delegate his wrath. He absorbed it himself.'

> **Insight —** *Every act of self-appointed judgment is a deposit into an account only God was ever meant to settle himself.*

Cross-references

- John 18:15-18 — the first charcoal fire, where Peter warms himself and denies Jesus three times
- Genesis 3:7-10 — Adam hiding from God, and God making clothes for Adam and Eve out of kindness before anything is resolved
- Mark 10:17-22 — the rich young ruler who hears the truth kindly and still walks away, showing kindness doesn't guarantee immediate response

DEVOTIONAL

A fire is already burning on the beach before Peter even climbs out of the boat. That is the strange arithmetic of God's kindness—it arrives ahead of the confession, not after it. We tend to imagine repentance as a transaction: we present our shame, God weighs it, and only then does mercy get released. But the charcoal is lit before the conversation starts. Breakfast is cooking before the question is asked. The kindness comes first, and it is the kindness, not the fear of getting caught, that makes the swim to shore possible at all. Most of us carry a gap—the years between the wound and the honest word about it, the fire we've been avoiding because the last time we stood near one, we failed. Kendall's phrase lingers: the distance between when we sin and when we finally say so. God is not measuring that gap to punish us for its length. He is holding it open, at his own cost, so we have somewhere to land. And notice what waits at the end of the hard question, asked three times, once for every denial: not a sentence, but an assignment. Feed my sheep. Not exile. Work. A future. This is what kindness does that fear never could—it doesn't just stop the bleeding, it hands you something to live for on the other side of the wound. The invitation was never to hide better. It was to come to the fire.

Reflection

- What is the specific gap in your life right now—the conversation you know is overdue—that the Holy Spirit keeps quietly bringing back to mind?
- Where have you relocated God's wrath onto yourself as judge toward someone else, especially over a sin you personally don't struggle with?
- Who in your life needs you to lead with kindness they haven't earned, the way Jesus led with breakfast before the hard question?

Closing prayer

God, thank you for your kindness—for all the ways it holds back consequences we deserve and extends blessings we don't, even when we can't fully see it. For those of us walking through painful circumstances we never expected, help us find the blessings even in the middle of them, blessings that remind us who you see us as, and the kindness that is still available to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Repentance isn't a decision made once; it's a gap between sin and honesty that God's kindness is holding open for you to close.

This week

Identify the specific person or situation the Holy Spirit keeps bringing back to mind. This week, close the gap: have the actual conversation—a phone call, a check-in, a dinner—honest and unqualified, without an audience, not a post or a group text.

Return to **Romans 2:4**