



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## **Love's Warning**

May 5, 2019

Romans 2:4-5

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*<sup>4</sup>Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup>But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Every mother that loves her child warns that child of danger. From the time he can walk and understand basic commands, she constantly warns him not to touch the stove, don't run with scissors, don't grab the dog's tail, don't put that up your nose. As that little boy grows, her warnings become sharper because the dangers become more acute. Don't jump off the house, don't shoot your brother with the BB gun, don't ride your bike blindfolded with no hands. She shouts these warnings, not because she wants to rob him of the fun but because she loves him deeply and wants him to be safe. Warnings from a good parent are always grounded in love.

Is there any more loving and protective parent than God the father? And here in our text Paul is awakening us to warnings, warnings that are based in profound love and are here for our benefit. But they are strong warnings that are held by God's strong love for people, giving us a different view of God's goodness and grace, helping us see that prosperity and health and tangible blessings have a purpose, and that purpose is to turn us away from God's wrath and judgment and turn us to His grace found in Jesus.

Today, as you are looking forward to the future, your hope is in your job or a lover or a child or your work. Maybe you are trusting in your good character, your honesty and good manners or success. And behind you is the crucified resurrected Jesus, whom you have largely ignored. I'm

asking that today, if you hear God's call, to repent. Turn into the warm and kind sunshine of Christ that He might thaw out your frozen heart. Today I'm hoping that you will see:

### **God's Love is a Warning of Grace**

I'll try to phrase my grace points as warnings from this passage.

### **Don't slight the goodness of God**

Verse 4 begins with another rhetorical question. Let's look at it, read it in full and we will deal with the first attribute of God. *<sup>4</sup>Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

"Presume on the riches of His kindness." Let's start with that phrase "the riches of His kindness." Riches. The over-abounding, ever-deepening, endless supply of kindness. And that word kindness is not a passive, smiling kindness. It's active goodness. It's the Lord doing good things. It's the common blessings of health and food to eat.

Kindness is often translated as generosity. God giving and giving and giving more. Every person who has ever lived has experienced the generosity of God. God makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. You may wonder, why does God bless lost people? Why does He spare a drunk driver? Why does He give good health to bad people? The end of verse 4 tells us that God's goodness leads us to repentance. God's goodness to people who don't even acknowledge Him has a purpose. That purpose is that they would see His goodness compared to their own rebellion and turn to the cross of Jesus and trust in Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Instead there is something universal that happens and it's embedded in the question in verse 4. "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness?" "Presume" means to take lightly or underestimate the value. It means to look at your life and see the thousands of ways that God has provided for you and not be impressed with any of it. God's kindness according to verse 4 has a purpose. When we see how good He has been, we should feel terribly unworthy of such mercy. This is the direct opposite of the "prosperity gospel," the entitlement that demands more. God's good gifts to us are here not to feed our materialism but to make us aware of our sin to such a degree that we can barely conceive the good grace of God in Christ. God's love, His good gifts are a warning to us. Don't slight the goodness of God. Instead run to His grace, see

Him there with open arms, turn to what He has done for sinners on the cross and come by repentance to Jesus. Don't slight the goodness of God.

### **Don't ignore the kind patience of God**

Let's read verse 4 again and put this trio of descriptions of God together. <sup>4</sup>*Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

Kindness, forbearance and patience. We have talked some about kindness. 'Let's talk about the words "forbearance" and "patience," especially forbearance. If kindness is the benefits that God gives, then forbearance is the judgment that God withholds. Forbearance is a word that's found only twice in the New Testament. It's an armistice, a truce. It's not that the war is over, it's just put on pause. God doesn't punish sin immediately. When a man commits a sin and doesn't fall dead on the spot, that's forbearance. When you hear someone blaspheme the name of God, and then they are able to take another breath, that's the forbearance of God. And when you presume or take light His forbearance at the fact that He hasn't punished your sin, you tend to think that you can actually get away with it. That's presumption. Forbearance is a truce, it's not peace.

Forbearance is temporary; there is a limit. If the sinner does nothing but sin and rejects God's constant and good invitation to come to Christ, then in due course he must face God and be accountable for all the sin. Instead God invites you to see Christ as the sin bearer, to look to Christ and His death on the cross as an answer to your sin problem. God has continually spared your life for the sole purpose of offering another opportunity to turn from your sin and by faith turn to Christ. It's God's constant love that has spared you. God's love is a warning of grace. Don't slight the goodness of God. Don't ignore the kind patience of God.

### **Don't provoke the wrath of God**

Verse 5 get serious as Paul brings up a subject that has grown strangely out of fashion in many pulpits today. Let's read and study verse 5 and let's try to visualize what Paul is saying. It's very vivid language for a terrible truth. <sup>5</sup>*But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* Hard and stubborn heart. Hard is the word *sclerosis*. John MacArthur said, "Hardening of the arteries will send you to the grave but a hardening of the heart will send you

to Hell.” The Bible is filled with warnings against having a hard heart. The writer of Hebrews says it three times. Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. To stubbornly and repeatedly refuse God’s grace and pardoning of sins through the cross of Jesus is the absolute worst sin of all.

Verse 5 gives us a vivid picture of what happens when you repeatedly hear the Gospel and yet reject it. The flood of God's wrath is slowly filling up behind the dam of God's patience and forbearance. For now His patience is holding back the rising pressure of His wrath. Psalm 7:11 tells us that God is a righteous judge and He feels indignation every day.

Furthermore in verse 5, Paul says when you are not in Christ, you are storing up wrath. Storing up. Storing up is almost always used in a positive sense for storing up or saving something good, but here it has an ironic feel. Instead of a retirement account, you are saving up wrath. Instead of a *Roth* IRA, you've got a *wrath* IRA. Forbearance and patience and kindness serve as the dam of God's wrath. While you have built your home right at the bottom of the dam, His patience is straining to hold back the flood of His wrath. And as long as you are rejecting His grace in Christ, you are only storing up more and more of His unquenchable wrath. You are becoming a hoarder of wrath.

Donald Barnhouse said when you reject Christ you are cutting down a tree that has sheltered you and it must fall on you. When you are rejecting Christ, you are weaving the rope that is going to hang you. Like Haman, you are building the gallows that will end your life. By rejecting Jesus, you are striking the match that will be your funeral pyre, you are sharpening this sword that will pierce you. You are forging the chains that will bind you.

Verse 5 ends with the hopelessness of your condition if you continue to reject the grace that is in Jesus. The wrath and judgment of God is a terrible thing, but the beauty of this passage is the present hope. It's not judgment and hellfire that drives you to Jesus. Do you see the beautiful end to verse 4? It is God's kindness that is here to gently bring you to repentance. Repentance gets a bad rap. It's not simply a negative word. It's turning from the darkness of sin to a new life in Christ. Listen to the kind love of God and this Gospel story.

The Bible teaches us that God is good and holy and created everything including mankind, all of us in this room. You were created in the image of God. That image of God within you and me

has been disfigured by our own sin to the degree that we are separated from God. Jesus Christ, who was fully man and is fully God, lived perfectly, earning righteousness that you and I can't do. Then Jesus took the wrath of God in the place of sinners. The wages of sin is death, and Jesus died on the cross for us. Then God raised Him from the dead. He ascended into heaven; and He sits at the right hand of God and rules the entire universe.

We can never *work* our way to Heaven but the work of *righteousness* has been done in Christ. The work of *salvation* has been done in Christ, so what is left for you is to *believe*. To believe means turning from sin, knowing that it is wrong, and turning to Christ, believing that Jesus saves.

Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Instead, look onto Christ and be saved.

*(Pastor prays)*