

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

KINDNESS

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. Deuteronomy 14:21

You can't hear the news on the radio, or TV, or pick up a newspaper, these days, without being made aware of the legal charges against the pro football player, Michael Vick. He is accused of violating the law by being cruel to animals, in his case, breeding pit bulldogs for fighting. It is amusing (if it were not so sad) that a man could go to jail for mistreating an animal while another man can abort babies for profit under the protection of the same law. The crime that Vick is accused of would not have even been a crime when the founding fathers of this nation set forth our constitution. Thomas Jefferson was quite fond of both cockfighting and dog fighting according to some reports. It was not even outlawed in most states until the mid 1860's and such laws rarely if ever enforced until late in the last century.

Now I have said all of that neither to defend Vick's practice nor to make light of cruelty to animals but to try to put all of this in a proper perspective. Fighting dogs fight because it is their nature to do so. Just as sinful men disobey the law of GOD because it is their nature to do so. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain because of sin in the decreed purpose of Almighty GOD. The very aggressive and bloodthirsty behavior of animals as well as men is the result of sin and its curse upon this earth in which we live. (see Gen.3:17-19) The picture of peace and tranquility which is brought in by JESUS CHRIST is that of a world wherein this behavior is no longer seen. *"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD."* (Isa 65:25)

Man's enjoyment of cruelty whether it is inflicted on animals by humans, by other animals, or on humans is but the result of the depravity of the human heart. Many who recoil at the thought of others deriving pleasure from the suffering of beasts or humans, need to be reminded that were it not for the restraining grace of GOD, every man and beast upon the earth would seek to devour one another. Every incident of road rage should cause us to remember that the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

Even those of us who might never enjoy a dogfight or watching another human endure physical suffering; have spoken unkind words which have smitten others in their very heart. We have all treated others with disrespect from time to time. We have cut people off in traffic, being in a hurry to get to our destination which we deemed far more important than anything they could be doing. We have turned a deaf ear from time to time from those whose needs were perhaps legitimate. We have all exercised righteous indignation and its accompanying disdain at the shortcomings of others while excusing our own similar failings. In short we have all indulged the human penchant for unkindness which stems from our innate tendency to cruelty. The only difference between the man who has been unkind to his neighbor and the man who revels in unspeakable acts of cruelty is that GOD in HIS mercy has seen fit to

restrain the wickedness of one, while according to HIS sovereign purpose letting the other manifest the degree of sin which all men are capable of.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST set for us the example of the life of a man who is perfect in all of HIS ways. HE was always considerate of those HE was around, lifting up the brokenhearted and comforting those that mourned. The scripture describes HIM thusly, *"He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."* (Mat 12:19-20) HIS purpose in the earth was to fulfill HIS FATHER's will; not to lift HIMSELF up above men by trampling on them or disregarding their needs. Every time HE listened to the plea of a beggar or stopped to heal a cripple, HE exhibited unparalleled kindness. This kindness was not that which rose from natural humanity but from that divine nature which inhabited HIS very being. HIS humanity needed no restraint for HE was not a victim of a fallen nature, for HE *"knew no sin"* (see II Cor.5:21) neither had any proclivity towards it. (see I Pet.2:22,23; Heb.4:15) HE, being free from sin, was both able and willing to exhibit the kindness which was the demonstration of HIS very nature. Oh what a contrast we see between HIM and the man who is demonstrating his own nature.

Kindness is a product of mercy and HE that is "full of mercy" (see Ps.145:8; James 3:17) is also full of kindness. It is of the LORD's mercy that we are not consumed (see Lam 3:22) How can the man to whom much has been forgiven not demonstrate mercy and kindness to all of those who cross his path? Can we who are as brands snatched from the burning justify treating our neighbor with anything other than kindness when we have been the recipients of HIS kindness every day of our lives? The man who is born again may indeed act according to his fallen nature but it is not possible that he can disregard nor denigrate the paradigm which our LORD set forth. Neither can it be that he should have no desire to be made in HIS likeness or walk according to HIS example.

The LORD set forth, by the hand of Moses, the command that a kid (baby goat) should not be boiled in his mother's milk. There are probably other lessons one can learn from this commandment but it seems somewhat clear that such an action would show a total disregard of mercy and kindness and exhibit a callousness and lack of sensitivity that ought not to be found among the LORD's children. HE has demonstrated kindness to us in that:

HE is faithful to HIS elect in every generation. *"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee."* (Isa 54:10) Even when we should have been cast off yet in HIS kindness HE has held us in the palm of HIS hand and daily loadeth us with benefits. HIS kindness (as HIS mercy) is totally undeserved by those who are the recipients of it and it is undiminished by their many failures.

HE has caused the events that transpire in this world to occur for our benefit. *"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."* (Psa 141:5) Paul recounted the kindness showed to him and his shipwrecked fellows by the barbarians. (see Acts 28:2) Such things are unheard of except that GOD should restrain their natural mind and direct the path of their feet. *"When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* (Psa 76:9-10)

HE has purposed to bring glory to HIS name throughout eternity by the demonstration of HIS kindness to us in the redemptive work of JESUS CHRIST. *"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:7) Can any man find a greater demonstration of kindness than that wherein we see that JESUS CHRIST has bled and died for unworthy sinners. *"But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."* (Tit 3:4-5)