

DON'T FORGET THE HONEY

"And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds." Genesis 43:11.

These words were spoken by an old man to his sons when they were starting upon a long journey. Those stalwart sons of Jacob were going down to Egypt. They were going to travel together for days and weeks -- all the weary way across the desert to Egypt. And the old man said to them, "Now you take a great many things with you, but remember this -- take a little honey."

This is good advice for people who are going to travel. If you want to get your friendship and your temper tested, just travel for weeks or months with friends by land and sea and air. There are difficulties and discomforts. People have different tastes, and they want to go different places and see different things. It is not easy always to keep things sweet. So this is good advice before you travel -- "Take a little honey."

As a background for this message, it should be mentioned that for twenty pieces of silver Joseph had been sold by his brothers to some traveling merchants, who took Joseph into Egypt and in turn sold him to Potiphar. During the years that followed Joseph was subjected to severe trials, but with God's help he came through them victoriously.

Because of his personal wisdom, ability, trustworthiness and also of the divine favor, Joseph was elevated to the second highest office in the country. He served with distinction and effectiveness in this important office.

During the terrible famine in the homeland, as well as throughout the East, Joseph's brethren journeyed to Egypt to buy grain. When they approached Joseph he knew them, but they did not recognize him. In private Joseph wept, but in public he assumed a stern attitude.

After letting his brothers have food, Joseph told them that they need not come again unless they brought Benjamin with them. Jacob was deeply grieved, but hunger had its way, and they took Benjamin on their second journey.

They took many gifts with them -- balm, spices, myrrh, nuts, almonds and double the amount of money, and Jacob added, "Take ... a little honey." It grieved Jacob to let Benjamin go because since the loss of Joseph he was his favorite son.

Jacob was thinking of what would happen when they arrived in Egypt. They had been there before, and they had told Jacob about the high official with whom they dealt. And Jacob advised them to "take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." In other words, "When you come into the presence of the great man, in the present you make, with all the other things you offer, take a little honey with you."

Jacob was a wise man. He knew how to manage men. He wanted his sons to approach the proper official and ask for grain, but he did not want them to be cold, distant, proud or defiant, but to be kind and conciliatory. He wanted them to approach him so as to win his favor. In order to do that they had to be conciliatory and kind, so he wanted them to speak gently and softly. He urged them not to forget the honey.

If in all our dealings with our fellows, with our friends as well as with others, we "take a little honey," it will sweeten our fellowship. It is a sour and sad world in which we live, and we sorely need a sweet and wise kindness.

Doubtless you have heard the old saying that you can "catch more flies with molasses than with vinegar." It is much better to "take a little honey" when you attempt to influence people.

In his debate with Eck at Leipzig, Martin Luther carried a bouquet of flowers in his hand, and the record says, "When the debate became hot, he looked at it and smelled it" -- and therein he was wise.

No doubt his critics thought it was just a bit of play-acting, but in reality it was the real man, who cared for little else than birds, flowers, children, music, the book of Psalms and Jesus.

No matter which one got the best of the argument, Luther kept his mind sane and his heart fragrant in the midst of it. If in all our arguments we each carried a bunch of flowers, there would be more light and less lightning.

How irreligious and unchristian men have been on various occasions when discussing religion. A century and a half ago a pamphlet was printed entitled, "An Old Fox Tarred And Feathered." Who was the "old fox"? It was John Wesley, one of the outstanding men of his age. Who was the man who wanted to tar and feather Wesley? It was Augustus Toplady, who wrote "Rock of Ages," that stately hymn that is so beloved by many devout souls. Toplady and Wesley differed about a point of theology. The hymn writer did not "take a little honey," but he wanted to hurl brickbats and tar. Too often this has been the case with people. Most people who argue over religion do not have enough to argue about.

If all of us would think less about ourselves, and if we would not forget to take the honey, people would love us more and we would be happier. The things we never regret are the kind words we speak and the kind deeds we do.

If you want anything from anybody -- the best friendship from your friend, the best teaching from your teacher, the best that anybody has to give you, you must be kindly and considerate. If you are cold and proud, distant and hard, you get nothing. If you would win your way, "Take a little honey." The honey of life is kind words and self-forgetful, loving deeds.

Thackeray said, "Life is like a mirror: if you frown at it, it frowns back; if you smile, it returns the greeting." You know what happens to you when you look into a mirror. If you want to see a smiling face, you must take the smiles with you. If you go up to the mirror with your brow knit, it is the same unhappy face that looks out upon you. You get from the mirror just what you bring to it.

Thackeray teaches us that life is like this. If you go to your classes happy and smiling, your lessons will be so much easier. If you go to your

studies grumbling like a slave, your lessons will be more difficult. Go out tomorrow with a happy temper and disposition and your whole day will be brighter and better. Begin with a bad attitude and temper, and the whole day will be spoiled. "Take a little honey." When Jacob saw his sons packing for Egypt, the old man said, "Don't forget the honey."

It is amazing how long some people live before they learn to be kind to others. Some people learn it a little better every day, but others are such dull pupils. In all of their years they have not learned much about the art of being kind.

Not all of us can be wise and learned. Not everyone can be eloquent. Not everyone can be witty. Not everyone can be famous. But all can be kind. When we are kind, one to another, we display one of the characteristics of God. When we are kind to those who are unkind to us, we are doing what God wants us to do and what He Himself does, for He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Kindness is one of the things which accompany a saving relationship to Christ. Kindness is that disposition which leads us to promote the welfare and the happiness of others. We are to be kind because we are the children of God and He is kind.

1. Kindness of thought.

Some people carry a heavy burden of unkindness of thought toward others. Their daily walk is darkened by the shadows cast by that thought. No word of dislike or hostility need be spoken. No deed of injury or vengeance need be done, for if the hostile thought is there, that is sufficient to hurt your soul. Your unkind thought may take the form of suspicion, or envy, or jealousy, or hate. Perhaps the best way to punish a person would be to persuade that person to hate someone. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul described love as that which "thinketh no evil;" "suffereth long and is kind." Kindness of thought is the soil which grows the loveliest of all flowers.

2. Kindness of speech.

Cold words freeze people, hot words scorch them, and bitter words make them bitter. Kind words smooth, quiet, and comfort the hearer. They are powerful to heal the wounded heart and make the burdened spirit glad. How deep and sore are the wounds inflicted by the unkind tongue!

3. Kindness of action.

How bitter and distressing it will be at the judgment to be confronted by unkind deeds that we have done, and forgotten; but how pleasing it will be to be reminded of acts of kindness and of love which we have done, and then forgotten!

On a certain occasion Dwight L. Moody had shown a great kindness to a friend. In thanking him, the friend said that he hoped one day that he would be able to repay the kindness of Moody. In his quick, abrupt way, the evangelist answered: "Don't wait for me! Do it to the first person who comes along!"

Someone has said,

"So many creeds, so many ways, that wind and wind,
While the simple art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs."

Lord Houghton once said,

"An arm of aid to the weak,
A friendly hand to the friendless,
Kind words so short to speak,
But whose echo is endless.
The world is wide, these things are small,
They may be nothing, but they may be all."

When the heart warms and expands toward others, going out to them with feelings of kindness and sympathy, the same emotions are elicited, quickened into life and reflected back on ourselves. So, as you go down the highway of life, don't forget the honey.