

Galatians 5: 23; “The Believer’s Gentleness”, Message # 49 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 23rd, 2024, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

We have now come to the 8th of the 9 fruits of the Spirit which the Apostle Paul gives to us here. It is gentleness, or what is called “meekness” in the King James and the American Standard Version. It is the word – πραΰτης (pra-oo-tes) in the Greek. Strong’s Concordance defines it as “mildness, that is, (by implication) humility: – meekness”. Joseph Benson says that it is “calmness under provocations, holding all the affections and passions in an even balance; temperance”. Henry Alford in his Greek New Testament says: “This word seems to be well represented by meekness – again, towards God and man.” I, myself, would say, that in terms of what the grace of meekness demonstrates towards God and men, it is non self-assertiveness.

In terms of how this grace is communicated towards other people, it is gentleness. In the way that a meek person approaches God and other people is with a humble attitude, not a proud attitude. As in all the other graces of the Spirit, we find that meekness, or gentleness was something that was first perfectly demonstrated in Christ. And then because of His Spirit’s being given to us as believers, we too are able to demonstrate this grace to others around us. So, 1st of all, I would like us to look at the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Then, 2nd, we will think about ourselves in relation to being meek and gentle people in a sense which will glorify God.

1st of all – Let’s think about the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Turn with me over to Psalm 45, verses 1-5. “My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” “You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever.” “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty.” “And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.” “Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the Kings’ enemies; the people fall under You.” You should be able to see here that the Person who is being spoken of, in prophetic language, is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sons of Korah are eager to describe His glory. Their tongues are like the pens of ready writers. They want to give their highest praise to this Glorious One whom they behold by faith. They describe Him here as “fairer than the sons of men”. In what ways specifically is the Lord Jesus fairer than all the rest of the sons of men? Well, He is fairer first of all, in His speech. He was perfect in everything that He said, and He was perfect in the way that He said it. He was perfect in knowledge, and He was perfect in His ability to apply that knowledge in just the right way, so that God would be glorified, and that men would be instructed.

He spoke perfectly unto each one’s instruction and edification, to everyone who would listen. He was perfectly able to rebuke, and exhort, and encourage. He was perfect in all the warnings that he gave, or the comforted that He bestowed. It says here that grace was poured upon His lips. Our Lord Jesus was given the fullest measure of the Spirit which could possibly have been given to a man so that He would fulfill the mission on which He was sent by the Father. And we should remember that the Lord Jesus was not a mere man; He was the Son of God.

Even though He was God, the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity, He bowed His will to the will of His Father, in perfect humility and meekness. And He became a Man. He was sent by the Father into this fallen world of sinful men and women with a cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. And because He undertook to fulfill this cause in a perfect way, God has blessed Him forever. In verses 3 and 4 that cause is described for us. The Lord Jesus is pictured as “girding Himself with a sword upon His thigh, as the Mighty One of God. In all of His glory and His majesty, He rode forth prosperously because of truth, and humility (or meekness), and righteousness.

But if we speak of verse 5 in relation to Christ’s earthy ministry we will be getting ahead of where we want to be. We cannot speak of His arrows being sharp in the heart of God’s enemies

before we speak of His humiliation and sorrows. What sorrows and humiliation am I speaking of? I am speaking of the sorrows which the Lord Jesus knew that He would have to endure, so that we as sinners could be forgiven of our sins. Turn with me over to Zechariah 9, verses 9 and 10. Sometimes prophecies describe in more detail, the meaning of the Lord Jesus' sufferings and glory than even that which is recorded for us in the gospels. This is because they depict for us the outcome of His sufferings; the result of His sufferings.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!” “Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!” “Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” “I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off.” “He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” You can see from these prophetic words that the daughter of Jerusalem, who represents all believers or curious on-lookers among the Jews, is directed to think about the ministry of Christ.

It says here that He would come to them “lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey”. And indeed this is exactly how Christ came into Jerusalem on the Passover week; the week in which He knew He was to lay down His life for sinners. This was meekness; this was real lowliness, to show forth His glory as the Son of God in this humble way. You will recall that it was also at this time that Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Turn over to Luke 19, verse 37. “Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!’” “Peace in the heaven and glory in the highest!”

“And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’” “But He answered and said to them ‘I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.’” “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying: ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!’” “But now they are hidden from your eyes.” “For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Why was it that so many in Jerusalem did not recognize Christ's visitation? Why was it that they could not follow Him, believe in Him, and receive His word and be saved? It was because they mistook His meekness for weakness. Many would have followed Him if they had seen him come to them as a military conqueror or great political as well as spiritual leader. But many who beheld Christ coming into Jerusalem that day did not like this kind of conqueror. They did not like that fact that His very entrance into Jerusalem spoke to them about their own sins and weaknesses, and their need of Him to spiritually save them.

They did not understand that His meekness was His strength. And they could not praise Him as others who believed in Him were doing. Let me ask you now – Do you praise the Lord Jesus for His coming in this lowly way? Do you praise Him for His coming to humble Himself to the point of death, even death on the cross? Turn with me over to Matthew chapter 11, and you will see how meekly and gently the Lord Jesus called to the people of that day, and how He does the same today, to needy sinners.

Verses 25-30 – “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (I am meek) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” You see what a wonderful invitation that Jesus gives to sinners; not only to

the people of that day, but inviting all sinners in every generation since He spoke these words, to come to Him.

He does not threaten you, He does not raise His voice to you, He does not command you to do what you are unable to do. He knows that anyone who really understands their own heart knows that their sins are a heavy burden. And so He says: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He says that you should take His yoke upon you and learn from Him, for He is gentle and lowly in heart. You see, sin is a heavy burden on your mind and heart. And it must be borne by Jesus if you would ever be truly free. A person who is truly freed from sin, by exercising faith in Christ, is now in a position to learn to do God's will.

He is in a position now, to keep God's commandments from the standpoint of the new principle of grace which is working in His heart. You have found rest for your soul, where once there was unrest because of the agitation and guilt that sin brought to your heart. Now there is no more laboring in frustration, being burdened down because you do not do what is pleasing to God. Now you find, that with Christ's grace, and the forgiveness of your sins, and a New Heart which He died to purchase for every sinner who asks Him for it, that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is a joy to meekly receive God's word, and it is a joy to meekly learn from Him because He is gentle and humble of heart and can communicate these great blessings to you in just the right way. Have you found this to be a glad and joyous reality in your soul? If you have, then you are now in a position to begin to show forth meekness and gentleness to people around you as well.

2nd – Let's now think about ourselves in relation to our being meek and gentle people in a sense which will glorify God.

First, let us think about the issue of authority. Can a Christian be meek and gentle, and still in a righteous way exercise authority over others? Well, turn with me over to 2nd Corinthians 10, verses 1-6 and we will see the answer to that question. "Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you." "I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh."

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." Now, you will notice that the apostle Paul is here explaining something about how he exercised his apostolic authority. And he begins his explanation by mentioning something which some Christians may overlook if they were not paying attention.

The apostle Paul pleads with them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. There is a meekness and gentleness in Christ which Paul knew about, both in terms of the truth written down in the Scriptures, and the truth of what Christ was really like, which he had experientially come to know. Christ had shown Paul gentleness on the road to Damascus on the day that he was converted. In gentleness, Christ reasoned with Paul and struck him blind with light, but all the while he was working in his heart so that he would come to know Him and follow Him and become the great apostle to the Gentiles.

And he was telling the church at Corinth that it was these graces of meekness and gentleness that he had manifested to them when he was with them. He could have been bold toward them; he could have asserted his authority over them when he spoke to them face to face. And yet he did not do so. When he was with the Corinthian church he says that he was lowly among them. But when he was absent from them, he was bold toward them; that is, he was bold in his letters to them. He was explaining a good many things that they needed to understand. And he made it apparent that he was strong in knowledge, and in conveying right doctrine. He did this by the authority of Christ given to him in relation to the word preached. A false apostle would abuse his authority and do just the opposite. He would not act toward them with meekness and gentleness, but with force and severity.

A false apostle would try to take them in, by guile and trickery. Paul spends most of the rest of the letter showing them the difference between a true use of authority and a false use of authority.

Suffice it to say, a true messenger of God, is a loving father in the faith. This what Paul was with the believers in the churches of Galatia. This leads me to ask whether you have come to see that a righteous use of God-given authority, is when a man is able to teach and lead those under his charge with meekness and gentleness. This does not at all mean that he cannot be bold, or zealous. It does not mean that he cannot be most definite in the way that he communicates the truth. When he is meek he will be leading his people by a righteous example in word or deed.

If you are a pastor or a man who is under authority, it means that when you exercise your authority, you are to be like Christ. And you will be like Paul. You will exercise authority by pleading and exhorting those under you with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Being meek and gentle in the way that you communicate, and the way that you conduct yourself around other people, are described in the verses that I just read to you, When you are exercising meekness and gentleness it means that you will be walking in the Spirit.

As Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 10, verse 3 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” We do not use carnal weapons such as vehemently trying to argue people down. We do not get into arguments with people in authority trying to get our own way. We do not strongly assert that our thoughts are the final word on a subject. But rather, we will learn to be to patient listeners. We will think about what other people around us might think or have to say to us.

The apostle Paul wanted to win the Corinthians to right doctrine. He wanted to win them to have a right attitude towards his spiritual authority. He was willing to punish (that is, to set in motion church discipline) when their obedience was complete. When their obedience became evident and they had repented of their sins, then he could act to bring discipline. He would be patient with them if they really showed him that they wanted to understand, and do the right thing. This is the way to win others to the truth.

You can see this in the way that Paul wrote to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2: 24-26. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” And you see it also in Colossians 3: 12 and 13 – “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against one another even Christ forgive you, so you also must do.”

This meekness is something which each Christian should put on if they want to show forth the reality of Christ in their life. If you will do this, God will bless you and help you on to a complete obedience, one that will glorify Him. God is opposed to the proud, but He will give grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3: 34, James 4: 6, 1st Peter 5: 5) I will end this message with a quote from Adrian Rogers which I read this week. “When you are setting a broken bone, what do you need? Gentleness. You need tender loving care. You can’t restore somebody if you’re harsh and overbearing. You’ve got to be gentle. Do you know what I’ve noticed about Dads whose children love them most? They’re gentle.

All children want a strong Dad, a Dad they can look up to. But they also want a Dad that is gentle. You can restore your children with gentleness rather than lashing out at them, screaming at them, and criticizing them. Try some tenderness with your children. If you’ve got backslidden children, they need tenderness. Your neighbor needs tenderness. Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. Do it gently. How has God been gentle with you when you needed restoration? How have you experienced the blessing of gentleness from a Christian brother or sister? Practice this! Who do you know who needs encouragement or restoration? Take action to bless that person with gentleness today.