

Living by the Spirit

The Virtue of Gentleness

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Text: Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Introduction

Living in the Spirit is made possible by the “fruit of the Spirit” or by the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, the term “fruit of the Spirit” could also be translated the “harvest of the Spirit.” It is an expression of what is produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we allow Him to work and produce spiritual growth within us.

Introduction

We’re accustomed to thinking of the strength as opposite to gentleness, softness and tenderness. Yet this is not always true. During World War 1 British fighter pilots made an amazing discovery, that thick layers of silk stopped low velocity shrapnel better than steel. So they wound the silk around their heads and then wore leather horse riding helmets on top of the silk.

Scientists still aren’t sure just what it is that gives silk its strength, but it’s true, that in certain situations soft, gentle, tender silk can prove far stronger than cold, hard steel.

Jesus showed us the same holds true for human character. Some people try to make themselves impenetrable to the people around them. Jesus showed us that gentleness, a heart that’s soft toward others, and tenderness are in fact qualities of great strength! Source: Scientific info from Dr Karl Kruszelnicki’s New Moments in Science #1

The gentleness spoken of here is not to be confused with weakness. This gentleness is all about strength. The Greek word for gentleness here (*prautes*) is used to describe an animal that has been tamed and brought under control. With that in mind, consider the **ways** in which the Holy Spirit inspires and enables us to manifest gentleness the more we yield to Him.

I. Gentleness is Seen in Our Attitude.

A. Those who have a spiritual gentleness are teachable.

B. Those who have a spiritual gentleness are submissive to God.

C. Those who have a spiritual gentleness have the tenderness of Jesus.

Jesus’ gave us the best examples of gentleness. “Even after thoroughly pointing out the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus Christ defined

a spirit of gentleness and showed how He truly felt about even those who were opposed to Him.

In Matthew 23:37 He lamented: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Gentleness is feeling this way about other human beings. In Matthew 11:29, Christ said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am *gentle* and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (emphasis added throughout). Here Christ makes a connection between gentleness and **humility**. --Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness by Eddie Foster / <http://lifehopeandtruth.com/god/holy-spirit/the-fruit-of-the-spirit/fruit-of-the-spirit-gentleness/>

II. Gentleness is Witnessed in Our Actions.

A. Those who have a spiritual gentleness desire to help those in need.

Someone once asked missionary, physician, biblical scholar Albert Schweitzer to name the greatest person alive in the world at that moment. The good doctor, whom some would have named as deserving the honor, replied quietly: “The greatest person alive in the world at this moment is some unknown individual in some obscure place who at this hour has gone in love to be with another person in need.”

Gentleness “is the humble and meek attitude of wanting to help other people instead of wanting to be superior to them. This attitude flows from a spirit of real love for the individual—having true, outgoing concern for their well-being. Such an attitude is shown in *how* we think about and treat others and what we say to them.” --Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness by Eddie Foster / <http://lifehopeandtruth.com/god/holy-spirit/the-fruit-of-the-spirit/fruit-of-the-spirit-gentleness/>

B. Those who have a spiritual gentleness represent God’s heart.

Philippians 4:5 tells us to “let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” Why does God want those He is working with to be concerned with how gently they think, act or talk? God has all the power in the universe, yet He is gentle with us, and He wants us to learn to be like Him. Then, when He gives us power, He will know that we will not use it cruelly or rashly. --Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness by Eddie Foster / <http://lifehopeandtruth.com/god/holy-spirit/the-fruit-of-the-spirit/fruit-of-the-spirit-gentleness/>

C. Those who have a spiritual gentleness are interested in restoring others.

Galatians 6:1, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” NIV

Conclusion

At their school carnival, our kids won four free goldfish (lucky us!), so out I went Saturday morning to find an aquarium. The first few I priced ranged from \$40 to \$70. Then I spotted it--right in the aisle: a discarded 10-gallon display tank, complete with gravel and filter--for a mere five bucks. Sold! Of course, it was nasty dirty, but the savings made the two hours of clean-up a breeze.

Those four new fish looked great in their new home, at least for the first day. But by Sunday one had died. Too bad, but three remained. Monday morning revealed a second casualty, and by Monday night a third goldfish had gone belly up. We called in an expert, a member of our church who has a 30-gallon tank. It didn't take him long to discover the problem: I had washed the tank with soap, an absolute no-no. My uninformed efforts had destroyed the very lives I was trying to protect. Sometimes in our zeal to clean up our own lives or the lives of others, we unfortunately use "killer soaps"--condemnation, criticism, nagging, fits of temper. We think we're doing right, but our harsh, self-righteous treatment is more than they can bear. - Richard L. Dunagin.

Clearly, our attitude and actions are two important means of conveying to others the reality of the Holy Spirit's work and two important *ways* of exalting Jesus Christ in our lives.