

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

GENTLENESS

Galatians 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”.

As a child I was taught a prayer which I in turn I passed on to my own three children. It is very simply but profound, Jesus taught us in **Mark 10:13-16 (read)** that we should receive the Kingdom of God as a little child in true simplicity and meekness:

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon this little child,
Pity my simplicity,
Help me Lord to come to thee. Amen

It takes the rugged strength of manhood and the controlled tenderness of womanhood to make the very finest gentleness. It is kindness in the very best and fullest sense of the word.

God's Gentleness

God is gentle; and to manifest gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit is truly to be like God in one of the most precious of His attributes. When David, under the inspiration of the Spirit wanted to describe this particular characteristic of the Almighty, he penned Psalm 23. God is described as the ‘Shepherd of the Flock’, caring and leading them into paths of righteousness and peace and finally dwelling with the Lord for eternity.

This Psalm (read Psalm 23) is often read at funeral services and are the greatest words of comfort to any Christian going through difficult circumstances. Every word seems to have a special healing balm soothing and restoring us to a place of well-being.

Isaiah 40:10-12 also has a quiet and strong beauty – verse 11 *“He tends His flock like a Shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young”*. God is powerful and mighty his gentleness is not weakness, soft or spineless but balanced with wisdom and authority, one day He will judge the world in righteousness and truth.

Christ's Gentleness

The gentleness of our Lord was manifested in His dealings with the sick, the poor, the young, and the fallen. There was a beautiful touch of gentleness when He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (read Mark 5:35-43). He puts outside all the noisy mourners and takes the father and mother in alone. Then in a caring gentle way He takes the hand of the maid, and awakes her from the sleep of death; lastly, there is a final touch in the command to give her some food. Such loving gentleness and caring.

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When Jesus entered Jerusalem in the 'Triumphal Entry', He chose a young donkey, not a large white horse as the Roman Emperors would have chosen. Matthew 21:5 *"Say to the 'Daughter of Zion', "see, your king comes to you, **gentle** and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

Jesus' whole life and ministry displayed compassion, love and gentleness to the crowds that surrounded Him wherever he went. He could have demonstrated His incredible power in a destructive way, but He always had His passions in check. However, a righteous anger was displayed in the Temple (Matthew 21:12-13) because of the seriousness of the situation where strong action was required. Jesus did not react impulsively; He knew exactly what he was doing. The merchants were making a house of prayer into a den of robbers. God's house was becoming a place of commerce, not a place of ministry. Jesus' response to those who were hypercritical and took advantage of others was calculated and firm.

The greatest display of gentleness in the life of Jesus is found in John 19:25-27 (read). Jesus demonstrated His sacrificial love to His mother, although in anguish and pain Himself after being nailed to a wooden cross, He asked John, one of His disciples to take care of her. Jesus was bearing the sins of the world, He was innocent of all the charges against Him, but chose to suffer in our place to give us a plan of salvation to reconcile us to a Holy God. He had the power to destroy His accusers, but refrained and chose to be gentle and forgiving to His tormenters (read Luke 23:34).

Gentleness in the New Testament Church of Today

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (read). In this verse, Paul the Apostle exhorts Timothy and the early Church to live peaceably with one another, even those who would oppose the truth are to be gently instructed in the hope they will repent and turn to the Lord.

Gentleness must rule our personal lives with our families, friends and those we work with. It must rule our words and control our emotions. All of us at one time or another wish we could take back something we said. When we are provoked, it is better to be silent and walk away rather than retaliate and be sorry afterwards. James 3:1-12 (read) describes how our tongue is the most unruly member of our bodies. James 3:17-18 (read) exhorts us to put on wisdom that comes from heaven (another of the Gifts of the Spirit - 1 Cor 12:8) that we may be peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit. James 3:18 gives us a promise, that peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. May those around us see Christ in us, not only in word but also in our actions and conversation.