Transformed by Fire – Gentleness

Galatians 5:22-23 / Phil. 4:5

8/29/21

* Galatians 5:22-23

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,****23****gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

* Phil 4:5

*Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.*

When we hear the word gentle, we might think of a mother picking up her infant son from a crib. She softly holds him and cradles his head, moving slowly and not holding so tight as to squeeze him. We might also think about an archaeologist on a dig, patiently and carefully unearthing artifacts with the slow strokes of their delicate instruments.

Now, instead, imagine that mother gripping the baby by the leg and dragging him out of the crib like a sack of potatoes. Also, imagine the archaeologist getting a shovel and chopping hard at the ground around the artifact, smashing against the precious piece of history. Which examples better describe how people in the world treat each other overall?

What is Gentleness?

Gentleness is defined in the dictionary as the quality of being kind, tender, or mild-mannered; softness of action or effect; lightness. Gentleness is a humble & meek characteristic of wanting to help other people instead of wanting to be superior to them.

* This type of attitude flows from a spirit of real love for the individual—having true, outgoing concern for their well-being over yours. Such an attitude is shown in how we think, treat, and say to them.
* The opposites of gentleness are anger, desire for revenge, and haughtiness.

Gentleness is not regarded as something good in these days. Some view it as a sign of weakness. For some showing gentleness is seen as being weak, pushed around or taken advantage of. In fact, if someone tells you, “You’re being too gentle”, that is not a compliment, but probably means you have no backbone & you need to be more firm. You’re a softy.

This is surely a wrong understanding of this attribute because Jesus says He is like this, and we are to learn from Him, correct?

Philippians 4:5 (NKJV) tells us to “*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand NLT – “Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon”*

Why does God want us to be concerned with how gently we think, act, or talk with others?Because God who has all the power in the universe, is gentle with us, and desires that we reflect His ways with others. He wants us to learn to be like Him, not just in today’s characteristic, but in all 9 of these fruits!

* Jesus was gentle with the woman caught in adultery (John 8) not because He was unjust or unrighteous, but to give room for her to recover from her sinful ways and through His forgiving love restarts her life anew. This was what happened – she was changed.
* Jesus made a detour to Samaria to meet another adulterous woman, by the well (John 4). She has had 5 husbands and the man she now have is not her husband. He did not judge her, but rather led her to salvation, for He has come to seek and save the lost.
* Jesus noticed Zacchaeus, a chief tax-collector when the world hated him and He invited himself into the sinner’s house. His gentleness touched Zacchaeus in a way that no one did and that changed his life.

Gentleness is closely connected to humility, so we need to also consider how God views humility.

* *James 4:6 - And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*
* *1 Peter 5:5 - In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”*

God resists pride, including our prideful justifications for not being gentle to those who have offended us, who have been harsh to us or who we don’t feel deserve gentleness.

In the Beatitudes, He said *“Blessed are the meek [gentle], for they will inherit the earth.”* (Matt 5:5)

* They will inherit the earth – meaning they will experience the abundance of life; fully satisfied. Therefore, gentleness in the biblical sense is not a sign of weakness but strength.

Gentleness is not weakness, but strength under control.

* A guide was taking a group of visitors through a factory. One of the things he showed them was a giant steam hammer capable of flattening a scrap car. Then the guide put down a walnut and had the hammer break the shell without flattening the nut.

That’s gentleness – great power under perfect control!

Gentleness is having the right & the power and authority to do something but choosing to bring it under control to fulfil a higher good. And for us, it’s a divine purpose.

Gentleness places our strength under God's guidance; it is a powerful tool for God's kingdom. Every person is powerful.

* We can speak words that influence or breakdown others.
* We can act in ways that help or hurt.
* We can choose what influences will inform our words and actions.

Gentleness constrains and channels that power. To be gentle is to recognize that God's ways and thoughts are high above our own. It is to accept God's worldview, reflecting truth about the spiritual and the material worlds.

It is to our advantage to have a gentle attitude because when we allow ourselves to be changed and filled with the Spirit’s fruit of gentleness, we will:

* **Show Concern for the Needs of Others.** 
  + Gentleness restores because it looks at the welfare of others. It is motivated by a concern for the well-being of others.
  + In reflecting on Christ’s character, Paul paints it well in Phil 2:3-4 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
  + Gentleness is more concerned with the welfare of others than with self.
* **Correct others with easiness,** instead of arguing in resentment and anger, knowing that their salvation is far more important than our pride
  + *2 Timothy 24-25 -* ***24****A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.****25****Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will learn the truth.*
  + *Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently*.
* **We will forgive readily**, because any offense toward us is nothing compared to our offenses against God—offenses He's already forgiven
  + Matthew 18:23-35

That’s the example Christ set for us. Gentleness flows from an attitude of selflessness and humility. That is, don’t take yourself too seriously. Don’t get too caught up in defending your rights, exercising your powers, and stamping your authority.

In Closing,

Rev. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), in writing the about the Sermon on the Mount says: “The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive... when a man becomes meek, he has finished with all that; he no longer worries about himself and what other people say. The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. To be meek, in other words, means that you are finished with yourself altogether…

A young woman’s dad had passed away. Before he died, he gave her an antique pitcher and wash basin that before the turn of the century used to be found in guest bedrooms. The pitcher would be full of water and the guest would pour water into the basin to wash off at night before going to bed. It was her most prized possession because it came from her parents’ home. And it became even more precious to her after her father died. She kept it on display in a very special spot in her home.

One day guests came to visit, and they brought with them an unruly dog that jumped around a lot. In doing so it wrapped its leash around the little table on which this pitcher and basin were displayed, causing the pitcher and basin to fall and break.

It was a tragedy to her. She took the dustpan and picked up every piece of that broken basin and pitcher. She kept all the pieces. And every evening, she would bring out the ceramic glue and glue pieces back together again.

We are called to be gentle, and that’s what gentleness does. It mends brokenness. It restores to wholeness what is broken. The world says, “Don’t be gentle. Don’t let people push you around.” God says, “Be gentle, and in so doing, you push people nearer to Christ.” Truth is you have nothing to lose being gentle. You may even gain a soul for Christ.

David says in Psalm 23 “The Lord restores our soul...”. He has been gentle with us, and we are now called to be like Him. The world needs to see the Jesus who has made a difference in our lives. And by the grace of God, we should show that same gentleness shown us and allow it to change lives.

PRAYER: We thank you, Lord for being gentle with us. Thank you, Lord, also for the gentleness shown to us by others. Lord we ask for Your spirit of gentleness to shine through our lives. May we reflect Your kindness to all that we meet. May we be considerate and loving, and may our words and deeds bring healing and comfort to everyone. Help us walk with humility and gentleness through life. Let the world be touched, the way we have been touched by your gentleness with us. In Jesus’ Name we pray, AMEN.

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