

April 14, 2021 | Wholly Living

Week 9 | Gal. 5:22-26 | Gentleness

When the God of the universe takes up residence in a person's heart, some significant/obvious/undeniable changes will occur. Paul called these changes the 'Fruit of the Spirit.

READ: Galatians 5:22-26 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ **gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, as I've said each week in this study, we cannot cultivate nor can we produce these virtues on our own. Paul is insistent that each of these divine attributes *already* indwells the believer as they keep "in step" with the Spirit. They do not need to be worked on; instead, they need to be discovered.

In week 2, we tackled the first attribute of the Spirit: love. Love is that place from which all of the other graces flow. Without love, there are no fruits of the Spirit.

In week 3, we studied joy. Joy cannot exist without grace. The believer has joy and can rejoice precisely because they do not have to earn their way into God's good graces. God's graces are freely offered, and this truth, in turn, makes our hearts glad.

In week 4, Bob was kind enough to tackle peace. And as he eloquently pointed out, "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace."

In week 5, we dove into the concept of patience. Patience is simply the capacity to accept delay without losing one's temper; or, as one commentator put it, patience is "waiting with the *right* attitude."¹

In week 6, we looked at the word kindness. More than any other, the Christian ought to be kind because we, more than any other, have been shown the kindness of God.

¹ Guthrie, George E., *James*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, editors Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2006), p. 266.

In week 7, we dove into what Paul called “goodness.” Like a painter, Paul not only drew fine lines and added intricate details to his canvas when he painted the fruits of the Spirit, he also used a wide brush with broad strokes to fill in the majority of the landscape and define the outer edges of his work. Generally speaking, all that the Spirit does is good.

Last week, we tackled a much more specific word, “faithfulness,” which relates to fidelity, dependability, and reliability. Those who have the Spirit dwelling within will likewise be individuals who are tried and true.

Today, we’ll look at the word “gentleness.” The Greek word Paul uses here is **πραότης** (pra-ah-tase). It's translated in a variety of ways: considerateness, meekness, humility, and mildness.

It is one of the key characteristics of Christ Himself.

READ: Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

It’s the spirit in which we should approach a brother or sister who has been caught in some offense.

READ: Galatians 6:1 (ESV)

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of **gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

It is the attitude with which we engage with those who disagree with us.

READ: 2 Timothy 2:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with **gentleness**.

It is the attitude with which we engage with those who are in authority above us.

READ: Titus 3:2 (ESV)

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

It's a characteristic that God wants every wife to exhibit as they love their husbands.

READ: 1 Peter 3:3-4 (ESV)

³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

God would have wives care more about the temperament of the spirit than the trappings of their appearance (e.g., more than once, my wife has cooled my anger).

And, if that wasn't enough, gentleness is crucial to one of the beatitudes.

READ: Matthew 5:5 (ESV)

Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

And, if you'll recall, the root of the idea behind "meek" is power under control. Meekness isn't weakness. It doesn't describe a person who is a pushover. Instead, the meek person is gentle and in control...always. They don't throw their weight around. One commentator called meekness a synonym for self-effacement.² Meaning, when we are meek, we are *purposefully* reducing or thinning our very own personality to minimize any and all harm that our presence may produce. As such, the meek are wary of power and authority. They do not yearn for control over others.

In all my years of living, I have never regretted being too patient and compassionate. But the number of times I have been too brutal, boorish, and brash could fill a dam to bursting. Even the disciples couldn't wrap their heads around how radical Christ-like meekness was (cf. Mat. 26:47-53). Jesus taught us that in his kingdom, might doesn't make right, but being *meek* does. Meekness is greater than mightiness.

Sad to say, those who are meek or gentle are perceived to be weak. For instance, the Greeks considered meekness a deplorable temperament because it was closely associated with

² Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1992), p. 98.

subservience and an excessive desire to please others.³ They thought it was the characteristics of the slave class. Furthermore, in a culture that prized debate and discussion, the last thing a person would ever want to be was agreeable. The Greeks then would've agreed with our idiom, "Might makes right."

But God would've disagreed wholeheartedly. God prizes humility, not pride. Those who come to him boasting of their strength are tossed away. But those who come to God humbly are welcomed as sons and daughters of the kingdom who will someday inherit the whole earth (cf. Rev. 21:1-8). So, when Paul speaks about "gentleness," he's talking about a characteristic that isn't a weakness but the very character of those who will reign over the earth.

So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Those who have the gentle Spirit will themselves possess a gentle spirit.

The sign of the Christian is the cross, not a sword. The Christian who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him and living through him will more often offer a helping hand than a balled fist.

May we be known for our calm demeanor rather than our venomous outbursts.

³ Carson, D.A., *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew and Mark, Volume 9, Revised Edition, General Editors Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2010), p. 163.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | Wholly Living | Week 9

TITLE: Gentleness

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

The sign of Christianity is the cross, not a sword. Thus, the Christian who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him and living through him will more often offer a helping hand than a balled fist. **Those who have the gentle Spirit will themselves possess a gentle spirit.** May we be known for our calm demeanor rather than our violent outbursts.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: