

## **Meekness and Gentleness**

Adapted from The Fruit of The Spirit, John W Sanderson

### **Introduction**

The King James Version lists gentleness as the fifth fruit of the Spirit. In today's English the meaning is better expressed by the word "kindness." The eighth fruit that we are dealing with in this study is translated "meekness" in the King James Version. However, it is translated "gentleness" in most of the newer English versions. This is not a matter of any difference in the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The Greek word *praotes* is found in them all. The problem here is that the English language has changed since the days of King James and Shakespeare.

According to the dictionary, meekness mean humbly patient or docile. Meekness is harnessing our passions in service of God and men; it is mildness of temper that allows one to be tolerant and patient, not belligerent and bitter under injuries (Titus 3:2-3). In the book of Revelation, John looks for a lion but finds a Lamb. Like the other spiritual fruit, gentleness is an aspect of God's character which God's followers take on as they follow Christ. The fruit of 'gentleness' isn't about being indecisive instead it's **a refusal to use power to harm anyone**, an unwillingness to cut and slash at people, wounding them for vengeance, spite or control.

Gentleness is a desire that **no harm be done**. There are gentle ways to be bold, non-violent ways to stand up for what is right, and non-manipulative ways to lead and to convince. But it is not human nature to be gentle. It goes beyond 'instinct', or 'education', or 'society's influence'. We are simply not gentle creatures. Certainly not males, despite the term 'gentleman'. Males are quick with the fists and the guns. Women have historically been gentler, but that's a relative matter; they have also the not so gentle side. Today let us learn what we need to cultivate and what we need to weed out to bear this fruit.

### **Sharing**

1. What we need to cultivate:-

**a. Acknowledging God that All glory belongs to Him**

*..To Him be glory forever. Amen (Rom 11:36)*

When we acknowledge that every good thing that has happen to us back to God, we are actually giving glory to God and not to ourselves. By giving glory to God, we have no room to be puffed in pride, but we acknowledge that we are nothing without God. Jesus showed us that He gave glory to the Father's Name (John 12:28). Although He has performed many miracles and healings, He gave the glory back to God the Father. In Philippians 2: 7-8, it says that Jesus made Himself to be nothing taking Himself to be a servant.... and he humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When we acknowledge God for all the goodness, we turn ourselves away from the limelight and allow God to take centre-stage and be glorified in it. We allow God to mould us to become meek and as we become meek, we are also gentle. An old woman who was healed at the crusade event in Singapore some years ago by Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke thanked him many times as she went on stage to testify and Reinhard responded to her to give glory to God instead! As we acknowledge God, we allow God to work in us even in a greater measure.

**b. Know Who We Are in Christ**

*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16)*

The Bible says Moses excelled in the meekness that is gentleness (Numbers 12:3). God gave him a high position. It is hard for the natural man to be gentle toward those who attack him, especially

if they attack his official rank and honor. But Moses did not try to defend himself. He was gentle toward Miriam and Aaron and let God take care of the situation. Gentleness includes the idea that we do not care about what happens to our honor as much as what happens to God's honor and what happens to others.

In our daily lives we cannot help coming into situations that bring conflicts with people. It is easy for us in the natural to react with violence or anger, especially if we feel insecure in our position. But when we accept the reality of who we are in Christ and trust the Holy Spirit to help us, we can be gentle, whatever conflicts may arise. When we do not know how to respond, we need to seek the Holy Spirit, who will help us to respond appropriately to our situation. In our flesh, we fail but with God, we are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37).

## 2. What we need to weed-out

### a. Self-centeredness

When we start to focus upon ourselves, that's where we become puff-up and try to seek for ourselves. In today's world, there is often a saying that goes like this, "What's in it for me?" The society breeds the thought of building self-esteem through personal achievements and seeking things that fits our agenda. This is just the opposite of what we discussed earlier about glorifying God. Jesus showed us that He has not His Own agenda but rather His Father's agenda. Satan fell into sin as a result of focusing on himself. Mother Theresa, once approach a baker for a loaf of bread but the baker ignored her. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> time she pleaded for a loaf of bread, the baker spat at her. Mother Theresa ignored her pride and responded gently again and pleaded for a loaf of bread for the poor. The baker pricked by his own conscience and guilt, gave bread daily from then to Mother Theresa. Mother Theresa was not focus upon herself but the interest of those in her care.

### b. False Modesty

Today's world gives rewards to hostility and going to an extreme. If we are to bear the fruit of gentleness, we need the Spirit to give us the ability to be gentle when it's hardest to be that way. Satan tries to imitate the real thing with an artificial fruit. As you can see, the artificial fruit is very much like the real thing and if we are not careful, we can fall into the trap of expressing limited love, temporary joy, numbness, insensitivity, manipulation, hypocrisy, half-heartedness, false modesty and choosing lesser goals. This artificial fruit denies one's personhood, one's God given ability and talent. It is not true virtue. Some people upon passing a test, they called it "peanuts". A tennis player who might have beaten another, might called it a "breeze". These examples are called false modesty. False humility refuses to recognize God has given us talents and abilities or that refuses to use them for His glory. We should instead, in those instance give glory to God and allow God in every possible opportunity that He is glorified.

## Discussion:

1. Discuss among the group what are the attributes that you find in those who are meek and gentle
2. Discuss how can we put those attributes into practice
3. Discuss what are the challenges faced in applying meekness and gentleness into our lives

## Conclusion

May we cultivate that fruit of the Spirit which gives all the glory to God and shows a gentleness that is powerful and demonstrates the high, holy, faithful love of God!