



The Fruit of the Spirit – Gentleness and Self-Control

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Introduction:

Today we are concluding the series of talks I have been giving about the fruit of the Spirit. We have learned that this fruit is something that manifests itself in the life of a believer. The nature of the Spirit and its life are manifested in these qualities. The qualities that are mentioned begin small and grow if the life of the Spirit is nurtured. Some of the fruit is only seen as one matures in their relationship and walk with Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Today we want to look at the fruit of gentleness and self-control. The word gentle comes from the word meaning having humility, or meekness.

I. FRUIT OF MEEKNESS

The word meek has beautiful imagery. The word picture is of a highly spirited trained horse. The steed is anything but weak and mild. Nothing and no one can stop this steed, should the master give it the command to go. This horse has all the ability and strength and speed to go as fast and far as any other horse, but it is under the dominion and control of the one who holds the reins.

When Jesus said “I am meek and lowly in heart,” in Matthew 11:29, He was not lacking humility. He was simply expressing the truth of His obedience to the Father. Meekness is not just a simple compliance; it is rather an attitude of submission found within the spirit. Meekness is an inner attitude of faith and trust. It believes that whatever the Master directs is ultimately best. This is a prerequisite to learning the things of God. (Psalm 25:9) The carnal mind says “I can understand, know and have wisdom in the things of God without spiritual guidance.” The meek spirit has an attitude that says “I recognize my unworthi-

ness, my inability and the fact that without Him I can do nothing.” Meekness is not only a prerequisite for receiving the power of the Word, it is also imperative in transmitting the word to others.

How do we receive the silent strength of Christ? Our ego must be yielded to Christ. Our calling is to yield center stage to Him. He must take charge; our control must be relinquished. So often I hear people say, “I must get rid of self.” This is not the secret. It’s letting Christ fill the self that opens us to His strength.

Lloyd John Ogilvie, “Silent Strength for My life”

Here are some rewards that are promised to the meek from scripture:

Psalm 22:26

The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him. May your hearts live forever!

Psalm 37:11

But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.

Psalm 149:4

For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

Fenelon said this. *There is no true and constant gentleness without humility. While we are so fond of ourselves, we are easily offended with others. Let us be persuaded that nothing is due to us, and then nothing will disturb us. Let us often think of our own infirmities, and we shall become indulgent towards those of others.*

There are certain specific matters in which we as Christians are instructed to manifest this fruit of the spirit.

- In Galatians 6:1, we are to show meekness **in restoring backsliders**. This is a directive so that those who have not failed in the way a backslider has, will not be puffed up with pride. It is only the grace of God that keeps any one of us from being condemned when we fall.
- In I Peter 3:15, we are to **answer opponents with meekness**. To argue and strive in a contentious spirit, even for the most precious truths of our faith and hope, is likely to make the very spirit of our striving deny the truth of our testimony. To vanquish a foe is not the same as to convert a person into a friend. Our immediate purpose as Christians is conversion not conquest.
- James 1:21 says **Listening to the word of God** is a great art, perhaps as much as the proclamation of the word. If as listeners we prepared ourselves as much as the preacher, what a revival we would experience. Human hearts are like soil; the condition determines the result of the sowing far more than the skill of the sower.

Meekness ensures a condition of being receptive and the end result will be a good harvest. This does not indicate that we soak up foolishly every new or strange doctrine. What it does mean is a laying down of all rebellion in spirit, and a readiness to obey at any cost what may be proved to be the sincere milk of the word. It also implies a putting away of the foolish pride which refuses to admit that anything more can be learned upon the subject in hand.

Probably nothing indicates a ripening of character in Christ more than an obviously meek spirit.

When we are truly meek, we know who we are because we know to whom we belong. We do not have to be defensive or justify ourselves any longer. We know we are loved and therefore are free to love and free to be the unique, special, irreproducible wonders that God meant us to be. Once defensive pride is taken from us by an authentic experience of humility, we are able to treat others like God treated us. Only a person who is afraid of himself and Christ is afraid to be gentle. "Lording it" over others is a sure sign we need the Lord.

THE WAY TO HUMILITY:

Blessed is the servant who accepts rebuke with courtesy, obeys respectfully, confesses humbly, and makes amends gladly. Blessed is the servant who is not in a hurry to excuse himself, but humbly accepts shame and reproach for a fault even when he is not to blame. Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor vexation. Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither greed nor avarice.

II. FRUIT OF SELF-CONTROL

The last fruit of the spirit that is mentioned here in Galatians is the fruit of self-control or temperance. Temperance is the government of our passions.

The word for self control is actually made up of two words from the Greek meaning infused with vigor, dominion, power or strength.

Society says that we are to be self-controlled for the common good of society. There are certain things that we are to keep ourselves from that society determines are right or wrong.

Scripture goes far beyond that reason. The Bible indicates that we are to keep ourselves from sin as God defines sin and by so doing we benefit ourselves and others as well.

God gives us power through the Holy Spirit so this fruit is developed. We ask God for His strength in matters of self-control, but then we have to make decisions that will manifest that strength that He gives us.

Here are areas that we need to be manifesting self-control in:

- **Our thoughts** – II Cor 10:5 – we are to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ.

What do you let your mind dwell on? God's word indicates that He wants us to think lovely, pure, true, good thoughts - thoughts that enhance virtues and bring Him praise. We are to have MORAL PURITY. Get rid of the stuff that tempts you. Get rid of the magazines that would lead you to lust in your heart. Don't rent the X rated movies.

- **Our words** – James 3:1-9 we are told not to lie, not to bear false witness, not to gossip.

The word tells us that every beast has been tamed, but no man can tame the tongue. I believe this is why God gives spirit filled believers utterance in other tongues. Speaking in a heavenly or unknown language is evidence that we have yielded to the power of the Holy Spirit that one member of our body that we cannot tame.

Conclusion:

The choice - By Max Lucado from "When God Whispers Your Name."

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Proverbs 16:32

Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

The fruit of the Spirit is more than just not flying off the handle or always being Mr. Perfect, or Miss Smooth. Instead it's being centered so that all our energies, when multiplied by the spirit, can be used creatively rather than being squandered.

The Apostle Paul writes to the believers at Rome in his letter Chapter 12:2 and informs Christians that it is not controlled ungodliness, but denied ungodliness, and not controlled lusts, but denied lusts, that are required in order to faithfully demonstrate holiness. All of the desires, affections and appetites that govern the men of this world system are to be denied their controlling influence in the lives of men and women who have been made holy. Gluttony, drunkenness, anger, malice, revenge, immoderate love of riches, power, and fame must have no place in our lives. They belong in the world's system, and we must flee them. They will never be content to serve us, they are bent on ruling and ruining us.

Judson Cornwall – "Let Us Be Holy" 1978