

Gentleness: Power Under the Control of Love

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

Intro:

In chapter 10 Paul leaves his instruction on generosity and returns to the problem of false teaching in the church at Corinth. His opposers have claimed that he was weighty and too strong in his letters while being weak in their presence, so Paul turns the tables and begins his written urging with “the meekness and gentleness of Christ”. Godly leadership always begins with gentleness. It is a characteristic mark of the Holy Spirit, for it is a characteristic mark of Jesus, and therefore is a quality of our spirits that we are to see transformed by His powerful work within our hearts, minds, and words. It is a quality that is growing within all Christians and a defining mark of leadership that is worth following.

If I asked you to define gentleness for me, how would you define it? What does it look like? How do you know when somebody is being gentle to another? How do you know when someone is not being gentle?

Gentleness is really the way in which we relate to another with less power than us, or less perceived power than us. It is the stronger moving toward the weaker, the authority relating to the subject, the powerful to the powerless. Put yourself in a situation where you are the weaker one, where someone has authority over you (boss, teacher, parent, judge, police officer, etc.) How do you want to be treated? How does it feel when others treat you harshly? Now put yourself in the powerful position with another (little brother/sister, employee, child, weaker friend who has failed again). How do you treat them? How do you treat them when they have wronged you for the 77th time? Can you be described as gentle, *especially when you are right*? How do you know?

Gentleness is most often seen through people’s eyes and body language and moves to their words. The eyes are soft, tender, attentive and concerned. The entire body pauses to listen, absorbing the full situation of another. Moved by compassion, gentleness moves slowly, deliberately, selflessly, until all the focus is on the other, trusting that the Lord has the best yet to come. Being gentle is not efficient, but love is never efficient. Gentleness speaks and waits, and waits some more, moves towards people and takes their problems as our own, touches them with love and compassion. People who are treated gently come away from the discussion feeling heard, cared for, and loved even while being corrected and coming to repentance. It is much like the way that we feel when we come away from an encounter with Jesus Himself, the truly humble and gentle Savior.

Today we will look at what gentleness is, what it is not, what it can do, and how to get it.

What is Gentleness?

1. Speaking softly, kindly, and under control
 - a. **Isaiah 42:2-3**, “He will not cry aloud or lift up His voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not extinguish...”
 - b. **1 Tim 3:3 and Titus 1:7** show that gentleness is a qualifier for an elder
 - i. **1 Peter 5:1-3**, “not domineering the flock, but proving to be examples...”
2. Using one’s own strengths to meet another at their point of weakness, for their benefit

3. Humility
 - a. The ability to listen to others without overpowering them
 - b. Meeting face to face with another sinner, and remembering your own weaknesses at the same time you endeavor to see them overcome theirs
 - c. Jonathan Edwards quote, p162
 “The Scripture speaks of no real Christian who has an ugly, selfish, angry, and contentious spirit. Nothing can be more contradictory than a morose, hard, closed, and spiteful Christian.”

What is Gentleness Not?

1. Gentleness is NOT weakness
 - a. Realizes that it is not about me, it is about Christ meeting my brother’s need and my brother seeing His Redeemer as the Redeemer
 - b. Like a gentle horse: strong, but under control
 - i. Strength, Power, and Truth under the control of Love
2. Gentleness is NOT remaining silent on issues of error and sin
 - a. God dealt with sin in Christ
 - b. When did Jesus get angry? When others were hurt, Jesus got angry. When He was being hurt, He felt sadness, but not anger.
 - i. Mark 3:1-5
 - ii. Jesus is gentle toward the deceived, but bold toward the deceivers (self-righteous Pharisees)
 1. False teaching needs to be boldly confronted
 2. There is a time for division
 - a. Poppie and the Church of Christ
 3. Titus 1:11-14
 - c. We typically, according to sin, function oppositely: When we’re being hurt we get angry, but when others are being hurt we feel sadness (pity). Look at how Jesus loves.
 - i. Jack Miller Quote
 “Many times the biggest issue is not the issue being discussed but the way we handle the issues and show concern for one another. It appears to me that this is where the Head of the church has His concerns.”

What Can Gentleness Do?

1. Gentleness Brings Life (Proverbs 15:4)
 - a. To others
 - b. To one’s self
2. Gentleness Creates Unity (1 Thess 2:5-8; Prov 15:1)
 - a. Turns away wrath
 - b. Unifies us in purpose and need
 - c. Knocks out the pegs of self-righteousness
3. Gentleness Leads to Repentance (2 Tim 2:24-26)
 - a. Wrath and Anger are Revelatory of Sin
 - b. Kindness and Gentleness are Redemptive of Sin

4. Gentleness is Indicative of the Presence of the Holy Spirit: What Can He NOT Do?
 - a. The question we must ask is this: Do I trust the Spirit of God enough to humble myself and show gentleness to others?

Where Do I Find the Power to be Gentle?

1. Remember the Holy Spirit!
2. Remember the Cross! (Heb 5:2; Gal 6:1)
 - a. Remember Your Own Sin
 - b. Remember Your Savior
3. Pursue it Through Prayer (1 Tim 6:11)
 - a. Repentance for failure
 - b. Faith in Jesus to change you
4. Above all: SEEK HIM (1 Peter 3:15)
 - a. Seek Him first, not what He wants from you first. That comes secondary:
 - b. Let us look at His beauty with Walter Marshall:

Gentleness is the Mark of Jesus That People Will be Drawn Toward in Repentance, and it is here by faith in Him that they will find life.

This is why the leaders of the church must be those whose lives are characterized by the gentleness of the Holy Spirit (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 3:2). Leaders must be the ones who are bringing life, unity, repentance, and the presence of God to us all. And this is accomplished by a humble and gentle spirit which only gets angry when others are being threatened or harmed. This kind of gentleness is a true mark of the presence of the Father.