

Fruit of the Spirit - Gentleness

We are told all over in the bible to BE STRONG!

We read things like:

- Be strong and courageous
- Be strong and show yourself a man
- Strengthen yourself

And when we think of strength, we think of power. When we think of power, we think of authority. And in the world today, authority often means being bossy and rude to get your way.

Today we are going to look at a different kind of strength and power. That which comes from the Holy Spirit! It's much more powerful than the "strength" of man.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 **gentleness**, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. But gentleness is not something that is often looked at as a positive trait especially for a man. When gentleness is displayed in a person, it is often looked at as weakness...."they don't have a backbone, they need to learn to be firm and demanding"

Would you agree that Jesus is strong and powerful? He made a whip and drove out those trying to profit in God's house. He cast out a legion of demons. He calmed the waves of the sea.

Do you know that He is also gentle?

Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)

Come to Me, all you 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."

Another text that we like to quote but then stop reading. "Come to Jesus and He will give you rest!"

He goes on to say "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."

This is HOW we get His rest.....take up His yoke and learn from Him.

A yoke is a crossbar that is used to harness the strength of a pair of oxen. A similar bar is used to connect horse collars to pull a wagon. The yoke makes the task easy. The strength of the two animals is brought under control. Their strength is focused to fulfil a purpose instead of each wildly going their own way.

This is a picture of gentleness - strength under control.

Just as wisdom is the right use of knowledge, gentleness is the right use of authority and power!

I read about a giant steam hammer that was able to flatten a car at the push of a button. The operator sat a walnut down on the platform and lowered the hammer to break the shell without crushing the nut. It was an example of gentleness - power under control.

See, we need to recognize that Jesus is all powerful. We need to know that He defeated death and He is the judge of every man's soul.

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Jesus is powerful. He wants you to take up His yoke. Team up with Him. When you are weak and worn out, if you are connected to Him, His strength will carry you. We are to learn from Him.

This isn't just to know what He has done but to know what you can do in Him. This same Jesus that is powerful is also gentle.

We do need to have a fear of the Lord because He is the only One who can destroy the soul and body. You need to respect the power. But.....learn from Him, team up with Him and have rest for your soul....because He is gentle.

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

We need to learn from Jesus to know that it's His desire to restore and redeem above all else. His will is that none should perish but all would come to repentance.

His will is that every single soul that He created would come back into good standing with Him by placing their faith in Him as Lord and Savior.

He died a violent death in gentleness....

In John 8 we see Jesus deal with the woman caught in adultery. Everyone expects violence to be the result of power and authority. They even start picking up their stones to kill her. But Jesus was gentle.....don't mistake this for weakness.....don't mistake this for being a coward.....

Jesus gives her room to recover from her sinful ways. And as she experiences His love and gentleness, it comes from a position of power and authority. If He says "she's guilty, fire away", she is dead in minutes.

But through His gentleness and forgiveness she starts a new life. He says "your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more". She was changed!

Gentleness is strength under control. It involves using great power even in its fullness yet not to the point of destruction, but restoration.

Gentleness restores because it looks at the welfare of others. It is motivated by a concern for the well-being of others.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (HCSB)

The Lord's slave must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, 25 instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. 26 Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will.

Paul writes this to Timothy, a young leader in the church that Paul has personally trained. He tells Timothy that it's important for the follower of Jesus to be gentle to EVERYONE. Because there is a chance that the Holy Spirit will lead them to the truth of who Jesus is and they will be freed from the devil's trap!

If you know me at all, I wholeheartedly believe that the Holy Spirit has the power to change lives and that apart from Him, I can do nothing. I can't change someone's heart. I can't make them see the real Jesus. I can't make them even believe that the Word of God entirely true and without error.

But what I can do is be gentle with them.

Proverbs 15:1 (HCSB)

A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

Some of you may be like me, I am kind of a no nonsense guy. I don't like to baby people. I would say "Be a man". It's hard to tolerate people that act like knuckleheads.

And on my own, I'll likely be short and harsh. I have to remember that there is a fruit of the Spirit named gentleness that I desperately need in my life. The Spirit produces it and I have to choose to bring it forth. I have to make the decision to operate in gentleness because it's not what my instinct is.

If I can learn to be gentle with people. Remember, there is still power and authority in gentleness, but if I can be gentle, PERHAPS.....God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap

We are even instructed to be gentle with those of the faith who are caught in sin.....

Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

When a believer gets caught up in sin, YOU are suppose to restore them in a spirit of gentleness.

The word here for restore is used in the Greek "to set in joint" as you would a dislocated bone. We should aim to take this dislocated man, whose sin has caused him to pop out of his place in the body of Christ, and we should gently pop him back into place.

Is it going to hurt? Yeah
Will it be sore for a while after? Yeah

It doesn't mean we just leave him dangling or dragging behind.

Paul instructs us to do this and says to watch out for yourself so you won't be tempted. This is a reminder that we are all one decision away from being out of joint. It may be one bad day, one tragedy, one moment of weakness, WATCH OUT!

THE WEED - Self-centeredness

Luke 9:46-48 (NKJV)

Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. 47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

We see this weed of self-centeredness pop up in the disciples. Who is the greatest out of us. Their focus is off of the central point of the gospel. To be outward focused. To serve one another. To think of others more highly than yourself.

Jesus tells them, the least among you will be great. Look at how it progresses...

Luke 9:49-50 (NKJV)

49 Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us."

50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

Here they shift from thinking they are greater than each other to thinking they are greater than the outsiders. "Um, Jesus.....he's not supposed to be doing that. He's not one of us. He's not in the club"

Jesus says to let him continue....he how is not against us is on our side.

Luke 9:51-56 (NKJV)

51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

Finally as a result of their self-centeredness.....this weed has begun to choke out the gentleness that Jesus is leading them toward. He's been teaching them mercy but as soon as someone won't receive Jesus, they want to call down fire from heaven to consume them!

He rebuked them and says "you don't know what manner of spirit you are of". Ouch!

Check yourself.....for this weed of self-centeredness because it leads you away from mercy and toward judgement.

Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. Not to destroy them. This is the season of grace and grace has to be dealt with gentleness.

When Jesus comes back....time's up. But for now, be gentle hoping they will see the truth.

THE ARTIFICIAL FRUIT - False Humility

We must recognize that God has given all people gifts and talents. Some more than others but everyone has something. In Romans 12, the gifts of the Father are listed and at least one of these are given to every single person.

If God has given you an ability, He has given it to you for you to use. And I believe He will give you success in using those gifts.

Ever wondered why the heathen who denies Jesus has a successful career. It may be that the natural ability that he has is a gift from God and if it's a gift from God then it's going to be effective or successful when it's used.

God doesn't give us gifts that are broken!

So we shouldn't downplay what God does in us or through us! You are not greater when you dismiss something God is doing through you. You are greater when you know who you are in Christ and proclaim His power in you!

When we belittle our own giftings with false humility, we will also belittle the gift of God in others.

God has given every person a gift showing that every person is worthwhile in God's eyes. That means others but it also includes you.

Psalm 18:35 (NKJV)

You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great.

Gentleness flows from an attitude of selflessness and humility.

The world says, "Don't be gentle. Don't let people push you around." God says, "Be gentle, and in so doing, you pushes people nearer to Christ."

You have nothing to lose being gentle. You may even gain a soul for Christ.

The Lord restores our soul, David says in Psalm 23. 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 shall show gentleness and change lives.