

The Fruit Of The Spirit – Gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let this MIND be in you! - Philippians 2:5-11

INTRODUCTION

1. The eighth quality which serves to constitute the fruit of the Spirit is "gentleness" ("meekness" in the KJV)
 - a. The Greek word is *prautes* {prah-ot'-ace}
 - b. This is a difficult word to define, for there really is no English word that corresponds to the Greek
 - c. Also, while "meekness" is a good attempt to translate the word...
 - 1) There is a common misconception about the meaning of "meekness" itself
 - 2) It is often used to suggest a form of cowardice and weakness, but there is no such idea in the Greek word "*prautes*"
2. The purpose of this lesson will be...
 - a. To define the proper meaning of "gentleness" ("meekness") as used in Ga 5:23
 - b. To consider the place this virtue is to have in lives of Christians

[We begin, then, with...]

I. DEFINING "PRAUTES" (GENTLENESS, MEEKNESS)

- A. PRAUTES AS DEFINED BY THE ANCIENT GREEKS...
 1. To describe persons or things which have in them a certain soothing quality...
 - E.g, having a humble and kind demeanor which calms another's anger
 2. To describe gentleness of conduct, especially on the part of people who had it in their power to act otherwise...
 - a. E.g., a king forgiving a servant who failed a particular task
 - 1) The king has the authority and power to render punishment
 - 2) But chooses instead to show kindness and forgiveness
 - b. Such a king would be praised for his gentle and meek behavior
 3. To describe the ability to take unkind remarks with good nature...
 - a. E.g., as when embroiled in controversy
 - b. Being able to discuss things without losing one's temper because of unkind and unfair personal remarks
 4. Most often, to describe the character in which strength and gentleness are perfectly combined...
 - a. E.g., a horse obedient to the reins, a watchdog friendly to the family owning him
 - b. There is great strength present, but it is tempered by a gentle spirit
 5. Aristotle had this to say about "*prautes*"...

a. "the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation, and not to embark on revenge quickly, and not to be easily provoked to anger, but to be free from bitterness and contentiousness, having tranquillity and stability in the spirit." (On Virtues And Vices)

b. This does not imply that there is never a place for anger in the gentle man

c. Indeed, the man who displays "prautes" is angry "on the right grounds, and against the right persons, and in the right manner, and at the right moment, and for the right length of time." (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics)

d. "he will err on the side of forgiveness rather than on the side of anger" (Barclay)

B. PRAUTES AS EXEMPLIFIED BY MOSES AND JESUS...

1. The example of Moses - cf. Nu 12:3

a. Though as God's chosen servant he could have rebuked Aaron and Miriam, he humbly kept silent - e.g., Nu 12:1-8

b. His silence was not from personal weakness, however, for consider...

1) His reaction to the golden calf - Ex 32:19-20,25-28

2) His pleading with God - Ex 32:30-32

-- Indeed, Moses was no spineless coward

c. Rather, his meekness was the result of a humble opinion of himself!

2. The example of Jesus - cf. Mt 11:28-30

a. Notice His meekness at His trial - Mt 27:12-14; cf. Is 53:7

b. But it was not due to lack of strength...

1) His powerful strength had already been demonstrated:

a) In denouncing the Pharisees - Mt 23:13ff

b) In purging the temple - Jn 2:14-17

2) His meekness at the trial was evidence of strength, not weakness!

[Gentleness (or meekness, KJV), then, is that virtuous quality by which...

"we treat all men with perfect courtesy, that we can rebuke without rancor, that we can argue without intolerance, that we can face the truth without resentment, that we can be angry and sin not, that we can be gentle and yet not weak." (Barclay)

Again, this quality comes from having a humble opinion of one's self, along with the inner strength to control one's emotions, tongue, and behavior. Now let's consider...]

II. THE PLACE OF GENTLENESS IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS

A. IN PARTICULAR...

1. We are to receive the Word of God with meekness (prautes) - Ja 1:21

2. We must approach brethren in error with a spirit of gentleness (prautes) - Ga 6:1

3. We must correct those in opposition with humility (prautes) - 2 Ti 2:24-25

4. We are to answer inquiries concerning our hope with meekness (prautes) - 1 Pe 3:15

B. IN GENERAL...

1. Meekness (prautes) is necessary for the Christian man who would be wise - cf. Ja 3:13-18

2. Meekness (prautes) is necessary for the Christian woman who would be precious in the sight of God - 1 Pe 3:1-6

CONCLUSION

1. One who is walking by the Spirit is going to be a gentle person, even in the most trying circumstances...

- a. Not because of weakness or cowardice
- b. But because of humility, coupled with the inner strength to control one's behavior

2. Such was the case with our Lord, who at all times demonstrated what it means to be "gentle and lowly at heart" - cf. Mt 11:29

- a. Let those who claim to be Jesus' disciples seek to emulate His example
- b. Let there be found in us that "fruit of the Spirit" which was found in our Lord as well!

3. And for any who may not yet be a disciple of Jesus, I encourage you to reflect on the words of Him who was "gentle and lowly in heart"...

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." - Mt 11:28-30

In the expressions of His day, the metaphor of the "yoke" refers to becoming His disciple. To learn what is involved in becoming a disciple, consider the words of Jesus in Mt 28:18-20...