

Why Do So Many Men Think This Fruit of the Spirit Is Only for Women?

“Now I, Paul, who am lowly in presence among you but bold toward you while absent, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1).

Gentleness, one part of the fruit of the Spirit, needs a place in our everyday lives. Often translated “humility” or “meekness,” the word “gentleness” is preferred by more modern versions of the Bible because it has a more positive connotation than the other two words. Many think of the meek or humble person as weak and ineffective, even applying gentleness only to those who are weak and effeminate. But this concept is contrary to the gentleness and meekness we see in the Scriptures. Gentleness is not the result of weak backbone. It is really power under perfect control. No one is more gentle than God, yet He is almighty, omnipotent. His glory is so terrible that no one can gaze upon it and live. Yet we read that he pities His children. Every day we experience His gentleness. He tenderly cares for us, supplies our needs and guides us through life.

The opposite of gentleness would be hardness of heart. We must not let hardness of heart creep into our attitudes. Unless we keep our spirits broken to keep in touch with God, hard hearts will separate us from God. When we see the greatness of God’s love, we break down and weep—we become tender. Looking at His greatness breaks all the hardness the world would want to put in us.

Jesus gave us the Lord’s Supper because He knew that as long as we remembered Calvary, we would be gentle in spirit. It is impossible for us to remain spiritually gentle without the

abiding presence of Christ within us.

Gentleness is not merely a sympathetic feeling. We may see a little baby and get a tender feeling toward it, but even unredeemed people do that. The gentleness that comes as a fruit of the Spirit comes through our relationship with the Lord Jesus. The love of God will make us humble, and, therefore, gentle. Humility is a disappearing Christian virtue. Many Christians want to lead; not many want to follow. But it is the humble vessel, willing to follow, that God can use in any way He wants to. The Christian who is willing for God to have the glory is the one God can use. Christian humility or gentleness is impossible without God. It is contrary to human nature and the way we have learned to live. We like to have the upper hand, to be in charge. We like to say the last word, have people applaud us. The meek, humble person will work for the glory of God's kingdom, even if it means being a fool for Christ's sake. This attitude shows true humility. There will never be hard feelings where there is real Christian humility. A completely crucified self cannot be offended.

Unless Christians are willing to be humbled, they won't get the greatest of God's blessings. Jesus not only taught this, He demonstrated it. He washed the disciples' feet, He permitted himself to be captured in Gethsemane, to be beaten, reviled, and nailed to a Cross. Phil. 2:8, 9 tell us "He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross." Power comes through meekness and gentleness.

Numbers 12:3 tells us that Moses was the most humble man on earth. Yet he was also stern and uncompromising when the occasion demanded. Notice his reaction to the worshippers of the golden calf (Ex. 32). He was defending the cause of God, so he was strong and angry and vengeful. Yet in Numbers 12 when Aaron and Miriam criticized him, he didn't make the slightest attempt to defend himself, showing true meekness. Jesus reacted the same way when He was tortured before the

cross—He answered them not a word. Yet Jesus was bold when He ran the money-changers out of the temple. In Acts 7 we see the meekness of Stephen who prayed in love for his murderers. But he spoke out boldly, not in fear or weakness. These examples show that true meekness has a fiery zeal for God. However, the Christian never fights for himself.

Why does God want us to be gentle and meek? That is one of the best ways to defend the gospel. First Peter 3:15 tells us that when anyone asks about our faith, we should give an answer with meekness. The most attractive thing about a Christian testimony is the spirit of meekness it contains. Meekness in our testimony is not the way our voices sound nor the expression on our faces. Meekness is the spirit in which a testimony is shared. The main focus is that God will be exalted in it. We can conquer people by argument, but never convert them by argument. It takes the grace of God to convert a person. If we consider others as valuable, it is easy to be gentle with them as Christ was gentle with all He met. {eoa}

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