

The Fruit of Gentleness

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Scriptures:

Galatians 5:16-26

John 15:1-17

1 Corinthians 12 and 13

Matthew 7:20-23

Matthew 23:1-39

Luke 19:41

Matthew 11:29

"Gentleness is strength under control. It is the ability to stay calm, no matter what happens."

— Elizabeth George (Christian Author)

'Gentleness' is among my favourite words yet it is rarely mentioned these days. Gentleness is the eighth of nine Spiritual fruits listed in Galatians 5:16-26. It is surrounded by 'Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness and Self-control'. They are intrinsically linked to one another, and therefore we should strive to grow all nine. When they grow in abundance, as they did so perfectly in the life of Jesus, we see pure strength displayed in gentleness. However, we will only grow the fruit as we remain grafted into Jesus, the true Vine, drinking of His sap and keeping His commandments. (John 15:1-17)

Gifts differ from fruit because they are not grown but distributed by God "as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Their purpose is mainly for upbuilding of the Body - the Church. Gifts must never be used boastfully with the intention of making ourselves look good, but in humility and gentleness. This will only be possible when we produce fruit, and the Apostle Paul explains this perfectly in his first letter to the Corinthians (chapters 12 and 13). Chapter 13 teaches us the perfect Agape love of God displayed in gentleness in its purest form, listing the attributes which are the outcome of His mercy and grace toward every undeserving sinner who turns to Him in repentance. Matthew 7:20-23 warns that we shall not be judged by our gifts, but by the fruit we grow. We need both, but must understand that gifts belong to God and are for this life only, whilst fruit is eternal.

During my childhood I loved singing Charles Wesley's hymn, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child...." The words taught us to look to Him as our perfect example. His gentleness was tenderly revealed when He lifted little children into His arms and blessed them. That picture was so precious to me then, and it remains precious today. Years later I heard many say that Jesus was not gentle, meek or mild, quoting Matthew 23:1-36 as their justification. However, verses 37-39 show Jesus' heart for Jerusalem as He tells how He has longed to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks. Again, in Luke 19:41 we find Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. However, His greatest display of gentleness is found in His sacrificial death as He looked upon those who had earlier cried, "Crucify Him...", those still mocking Him, those who had thrashed him, driven nails into His hands and feet and forced a painful crown

of thorns onto His brow. In the midst of all this, He cried "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Such love, born out of gentleness, forgiveness, and humility brings me to my knees.

We live in an age where gentleness is often lacking. As believers we are called to shine as lights into this dark world by emulating the gentleness of Christ in word and deed. Gentleness is a beautiful fruit which will grow in abundance as we feed on Him and drink from His living water.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for Your sacrificial love that saved me. Thank you for sending Holy Spirit who enables me to grow the fruit You desire. Help me to remain yoked to You, enable me to reflect Your gentle and humble heart and find rest for my soul. Amen.