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Needed, Gentle Souls

EPHESIANS 4:1-3

Introduction

1. Of all the graces which make up the fruit of the Holy Spirit, there is perhaps none more difficult to define than the eighth.

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2. Those men responsible for the translation authorized by King James chose the English word “meekness” to translate the original Greek word *prautés*.
 - a. However, for many, “meekness” suggests cowardice and weakness.
 - b. This word contains no such idea in the original Greek.
3. Later translations including the NKJV, NASB, ESV and NIV utilized the word “gentleness”.
4. The truth is, there is really no English word that corresponds to the Greek.
5. In addition to “meekness” and “gentleness,” other words such as “humility,” “courtesy,” “considerateness” and “self-forgetfulness” have also served to flesh out its meaning.
6. The gentleness which the Holy Spirit seeks to develop within our lives as Christians involves . . .
 - a. Humility and thankfulness when it comes to our attitude toward God.
 - b. Polite, restrained and compassionate behavior when it comes to our behavior towards those around us.
7. Some have described it as “strength or power under control,” specifically, under God’s control.
8. Today, lets look at this “power under God’s control,” and how it may grow in our lives.

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I. Those Who Exemplify Such A Trait

A. GOD?

1. Certain aspects of this trait are found in God, while others are not.
2. God will humble Himself before no one, but He will condescend (stoop down) to lift us up and make us great (Psalm 18:35).

“You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, and Your right hand upholds me; and Your gentleness makes me great.” (Psalm 18:35)

3. Can God forget Himself? No. Self-forgetfulness is not a part of His divine nature.
 - a. God will always glorify Himself.
 - b. In Isaiah 43:15, He reminded the people of Israel, “I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.”
 - c. Later in verse 20, He declared, “The beasts of the field will glorify Me,” and in verse 21, He proclaimed, “The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise.”
4. While God will humble Himself before no one and though He cannot forget Himself, He is gentle with us as a shepherd with nursing sheep (Isaiah 40:11).

“Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.” (Isaiah 40:11)

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B. JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

1. Of all those we encounter in God’s Word, only two individuals are described by this word — Jesus and Moses.
2. In Matthew 11:28-29, we find Jesus issuing an invitation to the crowds:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28–29)

3. This was in keeping with what God said about His Son through the prophet Isaiah:
 - a. “A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.” (Isaiah 42:3)
 - b. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)
4. His power was without question.
5. He spoke and demons fled (Mark 1:25; 5:8), seas were stilled (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24), and the dead arose (Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 11:43).
6. However, at His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane He did not resist or call the legions of heaven to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53).
7. When members of the Sanhedrin “spit at Him” and “beat Him with their fists” (Mark 14:65), He remained silent.
8. When He was “scourged” (John 19:1) and later crucified by Pilate’s soldiers (Mark 15:25), He held His tongue.
9. In all of this, the gentleness of our Lord was demonstrated, as He willingly obeyed His Father’s will and went to the cross where He died for our sins.

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C. MOSES

1. In Numbers 12:3, we find these words: “Now the man Moses was very humble (meek), more than any man who was on the face of the earth.”
2. Why was it necessary for the Holy Spirit to have these words recorded?

3. In Numbers 12:1, Miriam and Aaron, Moses sister and brother, spoke against him because of the woman He had married.
 4. In spite of their accusation, and though Moses could have rebuked his brother and sister, he humbly kept silent (cf. Numbers 12:1-8).
 5. His silence was not the result of any personal weakness on his part — he was no coward.
 - a. His reaction to the golden calf proves otherwise (Exodus 32:19-20, 25-28).
 - b. His request before God the next day to forgive the Israelites for their sin (Exodus 32:30-32).
 6. Moses' meekness (gentleness) was the result of a humble opinion of himself.
- ❑ Listen to how William Barclay describes such gentleness (meekness):
- It is the quality by which you and I "treat all men with perfect courtesy . . . rebuke without rancor (ill-will) . . . argue without intolerance . . . face the truth without resentment . . . are angry, but sin not . . . are gentle but not weak."

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II. The Need For Gentleness In Our Lives

A. IN OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERS

1. It is the spirit with which we are to restore those caught in a trespass (Galatians 6:1).

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)
2. It is the means by which we seek to correct those who are in opposition (2 Timothy 2:25).

“with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,” (2 Timothy 2:25)

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B. IN OUR PERSONAL WALK BEFORE GOD

1. “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,” (Ephesians 4:1–2)

2. It is the means by which we are to receive God’s Word (James 1:21).

“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility (gentleness) receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” (James 1:21)

3. James 3:13 reminds us that the truly wise man is meek and gentle.

“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.” (James 3:13)

4. Ladies, if your husband is not a Christian, Peter said the it is your “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:1-4) which has the greatest potential to win him to Christ.

Conclusion

1. God calls those of us who are Christians to walk by the Spirit.
2. To do this we must seek to be gentle people, even in the most trying times . . .
 - a. Not because we are weak or cowardly,
 - b. But because we are humble, we have placed our strength under God’s control.
3. If we choose to be Jesus’ disciples, then we should seek to emulate His

example by proving ourselves “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

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4. If you are not yet a disciple of Jesus please stop to consider the invitation which Jesus extends to you today:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30)