

Gentleness

The Road To Victory

There is little doubt that all of us have seen Christians who are better known for displays of righteous indignation than for gentleness. Yet God's Holy Word makes it clear that He expects gentleness to be an important part of the "Fruit of the Spirit" in His redeemed ones. One by one we have considered the love, joy, peace and longsuffering which are to be seen in this "fruit". In the classic verse that challenges you and me to face up to what God expects of us (Galatians 5:22-23), we probably have them in the order of their spiritual importance. Our neighbors cannot always see our love, joy, peace or longsuffering. These things may be very real to us, and yet folks need to see the visible results of them in our lives. In fact, if they don't see them, they may never come to know Christ at all.

The world may scoff at our theology and never take time to read the Bible, but as it has been stated, we are the only Bible the world reads today. Underneath the hard shell of most skeptics is a hunger to see something that works and is real. There are many hungry hearts all around us. Let us pray that God will keep us from ever being satisfied with our Christian progress until our daily walk is making others hungry to know our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now this gentleness that the Lord requires of us (rendered as "kindness" in some versions), He stands ready to produce in our lives through His indwelling Holy Spirit, just as we receive from Him all our other spiritual assets. By all means let us not make the mistake of assuming that we must, by sheer willpower, demonstrate the necessary self-restraint to produce the gentleness and kindness that God wants for our lives, and which our neighbors so urgently need to see in us. The world can and does counterfeit this to a certain extent through discipline of the emotions and reactions that we all feel to the irritations that come in daily life. There is a point beyond which human effort cannot succeed, in this, but there is no limit to what God can do if we are wholly yielded to His guiding hand.

Let us review some of the things the Bible has to say about this vital matter: *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient"* (2 Timothy 2:24).

"To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2).

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself is not puffed up" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

There are many, many other enjoinders in the Word of God to teach us that God expects this of us, and we all know that the world is looking for this fruit in us and must see it if they are ever to be made hungry for Him, and for the life which is His will for Christians. So again, as all through

this series on the Fruit of the Spirit, we emphasize that what God demands of us He stands ready to supply. Our self-efforts will surely break down somewhere along the line and fail, but "Jesus Never Fails". Again, we must treat every failure to do the known will of God as SIN, and ask His forgiveness for it, just as we would for any of the failures which we are more used to thinking of as sin. When we do, we have His promise that *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Then we humbly surrender to Him that area of our life wherein we failed, and once more we turn the humanly hopeless job over to Him, to live His wonderful, loving and patient gentleness and kindness through us. He is eager to take on the task, and you can count on His faithfulness.

You may fail again and again as the old human self gets caught off-guard at some clever trick of the enemy of our souls, and permit your own quick reactions to replace the process of turning the problem over to the Lord and letting Him live this life through you. Do not let this discourage you in the least. Discouragement is Satan's best tool, and so just remember that you are going through God's refining process; each failure is His opportunity of helping you realize your utter dependence upon Him. Just treat every failure as you did the first one, and God will be faithful as always to forgive and to cleanse and to fill you with Himself and His glorious power and love and kindness. Yes, HE is everything you need. Keep on turning the job over to Him and enjoy watching Him work through you.

— JHD, Book Fellowship