

Gentleness and Self-Control

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Bear. Appreciate that. What up, everybody? How you doing? Wow. Let's try that again. Good morning. Yeah. All right. Good to see you. Good to be here again.

Like Alan said, my name is Jesse, one of the pastors here. For those who are catching this online, a big what up to you too. And so Bear said, we're continuing Galatians. In the past couple of months, we've really slowed down, and we looked at a couple of key verses in the book of Galatians.

We think is really important, especially for this time. And it's a section that focuses on the fruits of the Spirit. And what we're doing today is I get to teach on the last two, covering the last two that are mentioned in the Bible.

So let's just jump right into it. We're in Galatians 5, verses 22 to 23. And if you have your Bible with you, you can open up to there. If not, no worries. We have the verses up on the screen as well.

It says this, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[1 : 0 5] Against such things, there is no law. So here's an unbreakable law straight from the Bible. You will become what you worship.

You will become what you worship most. And that is the idea behind the fruits of the Spirit here. What happens is he's writing to this church. The writer of this letter is writing to a church.

God has saved these guys. And just like them, God saves us back into worshiping him above everything else. And the more that God is what we worship, the more we become like him, which are the fruits of the Spirit.

Those things begin to work out in our lives. And so today what we're going to look at is we're going to look at the fruits of gentleness and the fruit of self-control. And I would say that of all the fruits of the Spirit, probably gentleness just might be the least desired and celebrated today.

Right? You want to ruin a guy's day? Call him gentle. All right? It's not something we're like, oh, yeah, I want to be known as that kind of person. But why is that? Well, we would really have to look at what we worship instead of God.

[2 : 1 3] Modern society is dominated by a culture of celebrity. Right? The heroes of today. What are our heroes of today? They're rich and famous, bold and beautiful, powerful and athletic.

We are glued to following their lives. Not that they've done anything virtuous or meaningful. I'm sure maybe a few have, but by and large, that's not the truth.

Os Guinness talks about the culture of celebrity. And he says, what they are today, a celebrity today is someone who is simply famous for being famous. That's it.

But we still worship them. We may never become them, but, man, we would like to. Even a little bit. Which is why we follow them in order that we could live somehow vicariously through their lives.

They are actually living the life that, if we're honest with ourselves, we would like to live. We would like to have all the fancy stuff. We would like to be on the in crowd. We would like to have all the attention.

[3 : 17] And so the celebrity culture that dominates today, what it does is that through them, we get a glimpse of the life that we really want.

And what's happened? We have become what we've worshipped. Which is why gentleness is of little value today. Because gentleness requires humility. And humility flies in the face of what celebrity is all about.

Now, if you think about it, gentleness and humility being kind of interrelated, it really makes sense. Because humility is thinking of yourself and thinking of others more.

And Jesus was the perfect example of this. He was the master. He was always thinking of others more than himself. He was always scanning the crowds and people and looking at what was going on.

He was in tune to where people were at and what was going on in their lives and what they needed. And moving toward them to help them, right? He's called the good shepherd. Not the dominant shepherd, right?

[4 : 19] Not the macho shepherd. He's called the good shepherd. In Isaiah, we get this picture of his life and the picture we get is the suffering servant. And all these things, it evokes this title and this idea of gentility.

And by contrast, what we do most often and what we see from our modern heroes most often is this. Put yourself first. You do you.

Consider your desires first. Consider your wants first. Consider your feelings above everyone else's. But the Bible says we are called to be like Jesus and to do the exact opposite.

Philippians 2, 3 to 4, it says this. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you not look or let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others. Now, we can stop and look at that and say, man, just that sounds like a great way to turn into a doormat, right?

[5 : 21] I mean, don't nice guys finish last? Isn't that the saying, right? And that whole idea is like nice guys, what do they end up with? They end up with nothing. But Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth.

And that word meek is a synonym for gentle. So you could reset. Jesus said the gentle will inherit the earth. Jesus saying nice guys in the end really don't finish last.

And that's the big promise. That's a big promise, actually, that Jesus is making here. But here's the thing, right? Jesus saying the meek inherit the earth. Here's the thing about the meek inheriting the earth.

Before you inherit the earth, you have to be willing to lose in the moment. See, gentleness is always tied to our actions and our responses.

You don't simply become gentle by talking like you're auditioning for NPR radio, right? You know what I'm talking about? Those guys, it sounds like they belong to a soft jazz station for some reason.

[6 : 23] It's always like, hey, yeah, welcome to the show. And we want to talk about, okay, that's like a really cool, like soft sounding voice.

But that doesn't mean that all of a sudden you're gentle. Gentleness has more to do with our actions. My kids can tell you if I'm a gentle person or not. My younger kids can tell you if their older siblings are gentle or not.

Why is that? Why is that? Because gentleness has to do with how you and I wield power. See, gentleness isn't weakness. Gentleness is power under control.

Gentleness is power under the control of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness. And that is why gentleness and self-control and the rest of the fruits of the Spirit are interrelated.

They're interdependent to one another. They rise and fall together. Let me give you a picture of what it talks about, like gentleness being power under control, right? So a long time ago when I was a teenager, we went on this really cool vacation.

[7 : 33] And we were in Utah. And we did this trail ride. You guys like a trail ride as you get to get on some horses. And they take you into some really cool parts of the country. And so we're, you know, we're getting ready to get on this trail ride.

And they're harnessing the horses and getting them all ready for us. And in this whole time, there is this little irritating dog just yipping constantly and running around the horses and nipping at their heels and under the legs and through the legs and all that.

And I, at some point, was just waiting to see this dog suddenly fly through the air because a horse had kicked him, right? I was waiting for that to happen. But that didn't. They didn't do that.

The horses possess this great control over their power, regardless of how irritating that dog's behavior was. They had great power. And they were gentle.

I got to ride on one of the seats. You get on a horse for the first time, you realize, like, man, I am at their behest. Like, if this thing decides to buck or run or do anything, I'm in bad shape here, you know?

[8 : 39] But, man, they are these animals with great power, and yet they have great control. And thankfully, they do because that dog lived to see another day. Here's the thing.

You and I possess power. You and I possess power. Every human relationship is two people possessing power over each other. Every human relationship is two people possessing power over each other.

Let me explain. Why do people make friends or date or get married? Because you have something I need. And I have something you need.

Bismarcky was right. Right? Oh, baby, you. You got what I need. There you go.

All right. We got some people old enough to understand where that song was coming from. Any significant relationship is a reciprocation of meeting each other's needs.

[9 : 41] And when that stops happening, right? When we stop meeting each other's needs, that relationship begins to deteriorate. Why? Because one or more of the parties involved begins to care about their needs and to put themselves first.

That's what's happening. And at the root of that is pride. See, pride and power is a bad combination. It leads to all sorts of problems.

But gentleness is power without pride. Now, whether you are eight years old or 80 years old, you possess relational power in some form.

So the question is, what is guiding that power? What is guiding that power that you possess? Is it pride? Well, pride loves partiality.

It loves being better. It demands more than it gives. When we are proud, what we turn into, we turn into these black holes, right?

[10 : 41] You know what a black hole is? It's like this gravitational pull that sucks in everything around it and just swallows it up. Everything that's in there just disappears into it, including light.

Nothing escapes. Nothing gets out. But black holes don't give anything. So you can't be gentle and proud. Those things are opposed to each other. But gentleness isn't proud at all.

What gentleness does, gentleness taps into self-control. It comes by restraining my selfish desires, my proclivity to be selfish. It pushes back against the desire to be first and greatest.

It denies my impulses for instant gratification. See, a gentle person doesn't use power for personal gain. They use what power they have to bless others.

See, a proud person, they can only see their own needs. And we can't be gentle. You and I can't be gentle if we're proud because power is just a means to fulfill our passions.

[11 : 44] That's all it is. But the gentle person, man, they see differently. They live differently. Gentleness sees the needs of others. A great example of gentleness is a new mother, right?

They have all the power in the relationship. Yet, all that power is put toward caring for that little baby. That helpless little baby. So when the baby cries, what do they do?

They pick them up. They hold them. They pat them. They feed them. They speak in weird baby voices to them. And you know what?

This gentleness, it gets tested, right? Man, after a while, little Johnny's crying at night. He's all colicky. 2 a.m. in the morning, wobbling towards that nursery like a zombie.

You may not feel like being gentle sometimes. Yet, what do we do? We control ourselves. That mom controls themselves. That dad controls himself.

[12 : 42] You dig deep to be gentle to that little baby. You know, it's funny. I was thinking about this. The relationship, it's funny, the relationship between our gentleness and the size of a human being.

It's like they're inversely related. The smaller they are, the bigger our gentleness. But the bigger they are, typically the smaller our gentleness, right?

But why is that? Why is that? Because the older they get, the older people are, the more you expect of them. And that's not abnormal. But here's the thing.

Then they let us down, right? The older they are, the bigger the letdown. They disobey and argue and don't listen. They betray us, disappoint us, do many things that hurt us.

And when that happens, it's hard to be gentle. It's hard to be gentle towards people when they act like that. It's hard in those moments to look past our hurt, to see what's going on in them, to see what their needs might be.

[13 : 46] Everything in us screams, man, that's unfair. But that is what gentleness refuses to hold on to. Gentleness doesn't depend on being treated fairly. That's a hard pill to swallow.

That is a hard pill to swallow. Which is why we struggle with being gentle, to be perfectly honest. Deep down, we all want to be treated fairly. Right?

Come on, let's be honest. We've all counted how many presents everyone got for Christmas under the tree, right? Just to make sure we weren't shortchanged. We want to make sure that was fair, even distribution.

But here's the problem. When you and I demand fairness, what happens when we don't get it? Well, we use what power we do have to try and right that wrong.

So you look at kids. What do they do? Well, they moan and complain and sulk. And then you look at adults. And what do they do? Moan and complain and sulk. More like, actually, we get mad.

[14 : 46] We yell. Or we retreat. We distance ourselves emotionally. We scream. We accuse. We belittle. Sometimes we really lose it and get violent.

Here's the thing. Power that tries to force fairness can turn really ugly really quick. It can become very, very damaging. And there is little gentleness where fairness is demanded.

But when we look to Jesus, we don't see that at all. He was treated unfairly and yet accepted the injustice for our sake. Isaiah 53, one of the great themes of this book is Jesus, showing Jesus as a suffering servant.

And we see an amazing picture of this when we think about being treated unfairly and him accepting injustice. Verse 3, it says this. He was despised.

He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows acquainted with grief as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised. We esteemed him not.

[15 : 53] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, our sin.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was put the chastisement that brought us peace.

And with his wounds, we are healed. All like sheep have gone astray. That's all of us. We've all gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord, because of that, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Doesn't sound very fair, does it? No one has been treated more unfairly than Jesus.

He was better than us all. He was holier than us all. He was sinless. He was perfect. He was good. He was kind. He was loving. Yet we despised him. He reached out to us.

[16 : 53] We rejected him. He brought healing and compassion. We killed him. You and I are the unfair ones. Before we look at anyone else, we have to see that we are the ones who put Jesus on the cross.

We played a part in the greatest unfairness the world has ever known. But the amazing thing is God didn't respond to our injustice and our unfairness with retribution.

He used the cross to give us what we didn't deserve. Peace, healing, forgiveness, and inheritance with him in heaven. We get to be called sons of God. And guys, this is why we can be gentle.

We could be gentle because God didn't treat us fairly. The Christian can never use fairness as a justification for being harsh because we live in the shadow of the cross.

The foundations of our faith aren't built on fairness as we understand it. See, from God, we should have received punishment for our sins. Instead, we receive mercy and grace.

[17 : 58] The cross is the gentleness of God on display. He refused to use his power to his own benefit. Instead, he used it to bless us.

And it cost him everything. He saw our need. And he stepped in the gap and he met our need. And here's the amazing thing, guys.

This wasn't God's one big moment of gentleness. He is gentle toward us every single day. And not because we suddenly have it all together. But because he is gently transforming us to be more like him.

And this process is called our sanctification. And it is worked out over our lifetime. Gentleness believes in this. It believes in the patient work of slow progress.

And we need to remember that. In Jeremiah 18, we're given this helpful picture to understand how this works out. This gentle work of slow progress, of transformation in our lives.

[18 : 59] It says this in verse 1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, arise and go down to the potter's house. And there I will let you hear my words. So I went down to the potter's house.

And there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand. And he reworked it into another vessel. And it seemed good to the potter to do.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, O house of Israel. Can I not do with you as this potter has done? Declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

Like clay in the potter's hand. And God is transforming us. He's doing a slow work over time. In Ephesians, it says we are his workmanship.

He's creating us. He's forming us into something. It's one degree of glory to the next, we're reminded in Romans. It's not an immediate thing. It's over a lifetime. And that's the thing.

[19 : 59] Just like pottery, you can't rush in making it. The potter has to apply gentle and skillful pressure with his hands to turn an odd lump of clay into a work of art.

And there's no shortcuts, guys. There are no shortcuts in transformation. There's no shortcuts in following Jesus. There's no shortcuts in becoming the work of art God has determined you and I to be.

What it does, it requires us to surrender ourselves into his hands and to his timing. But too often, we don't want to wait for God's change.

We don't want to wait for that transformation. We want it immediately. But what does that look like? What does it look like when parents want immediate change from their kids, right? What do we typically do?

Man, we just up the intensity, right? Little Johnny's not listening to us. We've warned him, warned him, warned him. What do we do? Up the intensity. Our voices get louder. We start yelling. More volume. More pain.

[20 : 56] More rules. We up the intensity. We do this to ourselves as well. I want to say this. A person who can't be gentle with others also isn't gentle with themselves.

So often, our response to sin and failure and weakness, our own response to our own sin and failure and weakness, is more pressure on ourselves, more pain we inflict on ourselves, more rules we impose on ourselves.

Man, but that is a short-sighted response to transformation, guys. Short-sighted response. Too much pressure on a lump of clay doesn't produce good pottery.

It's the same with people. We're called to be gentle toward each other. Galatians 6.1 talks about how to restore a brother who falls into sin.

It says, brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Now, what if that sin is against you personally?

[21 : 58] Changes the game a little bit, right? All of a sudden, we don't want to be restoring in a spirit of gentleness. We want to be bold and brash and confrontational. The Bible doesn't give us any exceptions, though, here.

It says, you who are spiritual. Which the scholar Gordon Fee says, that word spiritual there is literally a word meaning people belonging to the Holy Spirit.

And as people belonging to the Holy Spirit, we are given clear directions. Restore gently. So when we see a brother hurting or a sister hurting, maybe they've fallen into sin.

Maybe they've sinned against us. We don't leave them alone. We don't ignore them. We also don't treat them harshly. We don't put overbearing pressure on them to get them fixed real fast.

Now we restore in gentleness. We don't want to apply, the only kind of pressure we want to apply is the pressure of the potter's hands. And when we live by the Spirit, we live that way.

[23 : 04] Friend to friend. Spouse to spouse. Parent to child. Family member to family member. I'm going to have the band come up now.

I want to ask us some questions for us to think about. Does this sound, this call to gentleness, this call, this evidence to being gentle and humble, to losing some control of our power, to having power under control, to looking to the needs of others, to give away the idea of fairness?

Does this sound like good news to you? Does this sound like something you're just like, man, I can't wait to run out here and start applying this to my life? Does this sound like something you want to do? But God's challenging us to respond that way.

That's the fruit of the Spirit. It's what He is leading us into. It's what He's forming us and how He's forming us. And we have to rely on that. I want to ask you this question.

Man, you can run out here and you can try to fix yourself. And is that what you've been trying to do? You've been looking at your life and, man, I see all the problems. I'm going to fix myself, fix myself, fix myself. Are you trying to be the potter?

[24 : 23] Do you think you're better at being the potter than God is? Are you trying to fix others? Do you think you're better at being the potter than God is?

So if you're here and you're not a Christian, man, I want to hold out to you. The bad news is because of sin, a day is coming where God will not be gentle.

He will not be gentle with sinners. But you know what? Until that day, He offers you His gentleness. He offers you His mercy and His grace. He is offering you salvation today.

And that begins by putting your faith in Jesus Christ. Putting your faith in the cross that He came and He died for you. He died for your sins.

You can't fix yourself. He is inviting you to say, hey, just surrender to me. Give it up to me. I'm going to come and I'm going to transform what you could never transform.

[25 : 24] All the ways that you've tried and failed. I'm going to come and I'm going to start doing that. For those of us who are Christians, I want to ask you, where do you and I need to grow in gentleness?

Maybe it's toward ourself. Maybe it's in certain relationships. Either way, Jesus is reminding us that our hope for transformation is in the patient work of slow progress.

Surrender to the Holy Spirit. And we're going to take communion if you want to start getting that ready now. There's a little wafer on top. Those of you new to this. There's like a, there's two layers of peeling back. There's a top one.

So we're going to take the bread first. Well, you know what we'll do is we'll take the bread and the cup together at the same time. So let's get that ready.

Get that wafer out and get that cup open. Don't eat it just yet. Don't drink it just yet. Communion is an act of remembering.

[26 : 24] It's reminding ourselves that Jesus died for us. We live in the shadow of the cross. And we're remembering that Jesus' death means a life of gracious transformation for you and I.

It reminds us that Jesus is our celebrity. Jesus is our hero for very, very good reasons. And communion reminds us that we are called to worship him and him alone.

And in communion, what we're doing, we are recommitting ourselves to becoming like him. Through the work of the Holy Spirit. And so let's take the bread and the cup together.

Let me quickly pray for us. We're going to respond with one more song.

After I pray, pray with me. Lord, we thank you. We thank you that you are a good shepherd. We thank you that you are a God who is gentle with us. You didn't give us what we deserved.

[27 : 29] You treated us with amazing mercy. You are a good savior. And you are with us and constantly working on us. And transforming us and changing us.

And we thank you for that, Lord God. And so we respond with great thanks. And we respond with praise. Amen. Amen.