

## THE DESIRABLE GRACE OF GENTLENESS

2Sam.18:5; Gal.5:22

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### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Absalom conspired against his father, king David; he, by this conspiracy stole away the hearts of the men of Israel, 2Sam.15.
2. He sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel to effect the desired end of his conspiracy against his father, that he might become king instead of his father.
3. He conspired to kill his father, David, 2Sam.15,16,17.
4. He went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel, 2Sam.16:22.
5. In spite of all of this, when Absalom's army was pursued and defeated by David's troops, under the command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, his captains, David gave instructions to his captains concerning his son Absalom: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom," 2Sam.18:5.
6. However, Absalom was slain, 2Sam.18; and 2Sam.18:33 reveals David's reaction to his son's death.
7. Cf. David's song of thanksgiving for deliverance, 2Sam.22:1-4,21-25,33-36.
8. Where are the men of David's spirit today? Is it I? Is it you? How many do you know who possess his spirit of gentleness?
9. God's word upholds the spirit of gentleness as something both desirable and needful.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. GENTLENESS IS ONE OF THE NINE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT OF GAL.5:22.

1. It's rendered "kindness" in the R.V., as well as in 2Cor.6:6; Eph.2:7; Col.3:12; Tit.3:4.
2. Its opposite is classified in the category of the "works of the flesh," which keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God, Gal.5:13-21.
3. The grace of gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit grows out of, or is a product of, the influence of the Spirit of God working in our lives, by means of "the word of God" which is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph.6:17), by which we are led (Rom.8:14-17).

4. Gentleness or kindness (CHRESTOTES) is defined or described as “equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing.”
  - a. “It expresses that considerateness that looks ‘humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case’; it is rendered ‘gentle’ in 1Tim.3:3 RV (KJV, ‘patient’), in contrast to contentiousness or a brawler; in Tit.3:2, ‘gentle’ is associated with meekness (not weakness).”
  - b. Gentleness or kindness as the word is more frequently and better rendered, resembles longsuffering in finding its chief objects in the evil and unthankful.
  - c. But while longsuffering is passive and self-contained, kindness is an active, busy virtue. It is the thoughtful insight, the delicate tact, the gentle ministering hand of charity.
  - d. Linked with kindness comes goodness, which is its other self, differing from it as only twin sisters may, each fairer for the beauty of the other.
  - e. Goodness is perhaps more affluent, more universal or general in its beauty; kindness, more delicate and discriminating.
5. Gentleness primarily is descriptive of the nature and not to manner.
  - a. A gentle person, therefore, is one whose nature is so constructed that it works itself out naturally in sweet and benevolent action.
  - b. We can get a better idea of it, perhaps, by looking at it in contrast with its opposite; even as we get a better idea of light when contrasted with darkness.
  - c. The opposite of gentleness is rudeness, boisterousness, coarseness.
  - d. Gentleness has reference to the demeanor (outward bearing or behavior) of a Christian. It is not mere polish and politeness. It shows itself in a desire to please others for Christ’s sake, because it would please God and commend his gospel. Cf. Rom.15:1-3.
  - e. Gentleness has nothing to do with indecision and vacillation, so that it may be turned this way and that without regard to principles and truth.
  - f. It is tenderness of feeling. It is warmth of affection.
6. Note some cases in which gentleness appear to be particularly necessary.
  - a. Gentleness is required in the exercise of authority.
    - (1) Examples of how a bit of authority often changes some people to the detriment of gentleness.

- (a) Nero as a subject was noted for condescending manners; but when made Emperor of Rome, he became a monster of cruelty.
  - (b) An ordinary citizen is often one thing; make his a policeman, strap a gun on him, he becomes another.
  - (c) Elder at Rector, Ark.
  - (d) Man sweetly courting a future wife; man married, abusing the authority of a husband.
- b. Gentleness is required in a suitable manner to give warnings and to administer reproofs.
  - c. Gentleness is required in attempting to allay animosities, ill-will, resentment, enmity, hostile action.
  - d. Gentleness is necessary in the treatment of strangers, even enemies.
  - e. Gentleness is necessary in the endearments of friendships.
  - f. Without it there can be no union of hearts.

**B. GENTLENESS IS PART OF THE SIGN OF WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE, Jas.3:13-18.**

1. Note companion words in the context.
2. Note this about gentleness from these verses.
  - a. It's the sign of a wise man, not a weak man.
  - b. It's the sign of a wise man endowed with knowledge.
  - c. It's a sign of one who shows out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.
  - d. It's a sign of wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, *gentle*, and easy to be entreated (willing to yield), full of mercy (compassion) and good fruits (deeds), without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
3. On the other hand, a false, counterfeit wisdom, with a three-fold description, a wisdom that is here described as being "earthly, sensual, devilish" is in evidence when there is in your hearts "bitter envying and strife. Cf. Gal.5:13-21.
  - a. It is earthly in its nature and origin, as contrasted with that which cometh from above. See Phil.3:19.
  - b. It is sensual, not spiritual; but animal, ruled by the flesh; a wisdom in accordance with, or springing from, the corrupt desires and affections; so in Jude 19.
  - c. It is devilish. IN this we have yet a darker condemnation; it is demon-like.

- d. This earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom results in “confusion and every evil work,” because of “bitter envying and strife (“bitter zeal and faction”) in your hearts,” V.16.
4. More on the features, characteristics or nature of true wisdom of which gentleness is a part.
    - a. In origin it is “from above” (a gift of God, Ch.1:5) and is presented here by James as possessed of seven great characteristics, among which gentleness is specified as one.
    - b. In respect of a man himself, it is “first pure,” meaning chaste, unsullied, holy. For purity is the fundamental characteristic of every thing that is “from above”.
    - c. In respect of his demeanor toward his fellow-man, it is then:
      - (1) “Peaceable,” indisposed to conflict or dissension. Cf. Rom.12:18; 1Cor.1:10-13.
        - (a) “Bitter envying and strife (jealousy and faction)” are characteristics of earthly wisdom.
        - (b) The wisdom that is from above deprecates wrangling, and labors to quench animosities.
      - (2) “Gentle,” forbearing, courteous, considerate and kind.
        - (a) Gentleness or kindness is just the outward aspect of the grace of peaceableness, the vesture (garment, dress) in which the peaceable spirit should be clothed.
      - (3) “Easy to be entreated” (willing to yield); accessible, compliant, open to conviction, and willing to listen to remonstrance or reproof.
        - (a) Compare Diotrephes, 3Jno.9,10.
        - (b) The wise man who is peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated thinks more about his duty to his fellow man than his personal rights. Cf. Paul, 1Cor.8:9,13; 10:19-23.
      - (4) “Full of mercy and good fruits”; overflowing with feelings of kindness and compassion, and finding a healthy outlet for these in acts of practical, scriptural beneficence.
      - (5) “Without partiality”.
        - (a) “Without variance, or doubtfulness,” R.V.
        - (b) Steady, persistent, unmistakable, never “divided in its own mind. See Jas.2:4; 1:6. And therefore never halting in the fulfillment of its mission.

- (c) Vine, Vol. III, 63: “primarily signifies not to be parted...hence, without uncertainty, or indecision, doubtfulness.”
    - (6) “Without hypocrisy”; sincere, always really being what it seems and professes.
- 5. V.18 states the results of the wisdom that is from above of which the grace of gentleness is a part.
  - a. “The fruit (harvest) of righteousness is sown in (grown from the seed of) peace of them that make peace (or by those who are peacemakers).” See Mt.5:9.
  - b. The fruit of the earthly wisdom is “confusion and every vile deed” (v.16), but the fruit of the heavenly wisdom consists in “righteousness.”
  - c. “Peace” is the congenial (kindred, favorable) soil in which this wisdom takes root and grows.
  - d. The seed “sown” is the precious word of God. This, of course, is how men are peacemakers.
  - e. They “that make peace” are the spiritual farmers who scatter it in hope; and “righteousness” is the blessed harvest which shall reward their labor.

**C. GENTLENESS IS A REQUIREMENT OF THE LORD’S SERVANTS AND TEACHERS OF HIS WORD.**

- 1. 1Th.2:1-13. Read, but emphasize Vv.7,8.
  - a. This text reveals that the teacher or the preacher:
    - (1) Can be bold in preaching the gospel “with much contention”, or “in much conflict,” V.2
      - (a) This is alluding to the peril and danger with which Paul preached the gospel in Thessalonica. See Ac.17:1-9,10-13; 1Th.1:6.
      - (b) Cf. Ac.4:31; 4:13-20; 5:25-32,40-42.
    - (2) Can also exhort people, V.3. Cf. Tit.2:15; 2Tim.4:1-5.
    - (3) Can exhort, comfort and charge people, Vv.11,12.
    - (4) Can yet be gentle and affectionate, Vv.7,8.
    - (5) Can also be successful in converting and edifying those so taught, 1Th.2:13,14; 1:5-10.
    - (6) Can do this, be successful in doing this, without pleasing men, but pleasing God while doing it, and do it without using flattering words, nor a cloke of covetousness, 1Th.2:4,5; Cf. Gal.1:6-10.
- 2. 2Tim.2:24-26.

- a. In this text there are four musts of an effective teacher: one negative; three positive.
    - (1) “Must not strive”; i.e., fight or quarrel, V.24.
    - (2) “Be gentle (patient) unto all men,” V.24.
    - (3) “Patience (forbearance)”, V.24.
    - (4) “In meekness (mildness of disposition; gentleness of spirit) instructing those that oppose themselves,” V.25.
  - b. The purpose of these things is to bring those who oppose themselves to “repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive at his will,” Vv.25b,26.
  - c. The absence of these things, of which gentleness and/or kindness is one, may very well prevent this result.
  - d. Once again we are made aware of the desirableness of the grace of gentleness or kindness.
3. 2Cor.10:1-9.
- a. Note two things from this text as we continue to emphasize that gentleness has a place in exhorting brethren for the purpose of our edification.
    - (1) In V.1, Paul said: “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”
    - (2) Yet, in V.8, he reminds them of his authority as an apostle of Christ, which the Lord had given him for their edification, and not for your destruction.

### III. CONCLUSION

- 1. Is this grace of gentleness evident in your life? In my life?
- 2. Is this characteristic of the wisdom which is from above, along with its associate characteristics, evident in our lives and efforts in reaching others with the gospel of Christ, and in establishing them in the faith once they are converted to Christ?
- 3. Don’t misunderstand, and don’t be misled. To be gentle in teaching and preaching the word of God and dealing with people doesn’t mean one:
  - a. Is a compromiser.
  - b. Is a doctrinal liberal.
  - c. Is a soft peddler.
  - d. Is ineffective in converting and edifying the converted.
  - e. Is not a servant of the Lord!