

Text: Gal 5.22-23

Tonight, we conclude our study of the fruit of the Spirit. Lest we forget where we are, however, let's start again with Tom Constable's outline for Galatians:

- I. Introduction 1:1–10
- II. Personal defense of Paul's gospel 1:11–2:21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1–4:31
 - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
 - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1–6:10
 - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
 - 1. Living without the Law 5:1–12
 - 2. Living without license 5: 13-15
 - 3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16–26¹

We are now working on the general theme, "Living by the Holy Spirit."

Let's read the whole section tonight, Gal 5.16-26. Of course, we are still looking closely at vv. 22-23.

Gal 5.22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

As we think about the way the Spirit displays his fruit in our lives, we see that he revolutionizes our spirit from our natural man to the new man who is found in Christ Jesus.

I remind you once again of the Timothy George quote on this passage:

Timothy George: "we should sit back and contemplate the beauty of this image rather than overinterpreting and analyzing it to death"²

We also should remember, as Ryrie noted, that the fruit of the Spirit is the display of Jesus Christ in our own life. This is the goal of the Spirit-walk, to be like Jesus.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Galatians, Introduction, Outline.

² Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: B&H, 1994), 400.

The list concludes with gentleness (meekness) and self-control.

I. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness (meekness, κηϋ)

A. Defining the term

No doubt you've heard the "preacher's saying" that goes this way: "meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control" — the saying gets to the very heart of this quality.

1. The ancient Greeks thought of gentleness as a high virtue
 - a. Basically a "'mild and gentle friendliness,' ... the opp. of roughness, ... bad-temper, ... brusqueness"³
 - b. To them, it displayed "high mindedness"
 - 1) Nobility
 - 2) High culture
 - 3) The wise

Such a person "remains calm even in face of abuse"⁴

Classic example: Socrates

Key: glorifies the noble individual

2. The LXX used it to speak of the same demeanor, but with a different motive:
 - a. "In [Psalm 45:5] πραϋτης [gentleness], with truth and righteousness, is a characteristic of the royal hero, who is then called the prince of peace in v. 7f."⁵

Ps 45.3-7 Gird Your sword on *Your* thigh, O Mighty One, *In* Your splendor and Your majesty!⁴ And in Your majesty ride on victoriously, For the cause of truth and **meekness** and righteousness; Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.⁵ Your arrows are sharp; The peoples fall under You; *Your arrows are* in the heart of the King's

³ Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz, "Πραϋς, Πραϋτης," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 646.

⁴ Hauck and Schulz, 646.

⁵ Hauck and Schulz, 648.

enemies. ⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. ⁷ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

b. Moses is also called the “meekest” man (Num 12.3)

Num 12.3 (Now the man Moses was very **humble**, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

The Hero (Messiah) and Moses have great strength and authority, but how do they accomplish God’s will? Through submission to God, in meekness.

3. The Lord Jesus

Mt 11.29 “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.

4. Paul

a. Paul had reason to sternly rebuke the Corinthians, but he employed meekness

2 Cor 10.1 ¶ Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

b. In his meekness, he reminded them of his strength

1 Cor 4.21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

“It is regrettable that the English word ‘gentleness’ has come to have the popular connotation of a wimpish weakness and nonassertive lack of vigor. As an expression of the fruit of the Spirit, gentleness is strength under control, power harnessed in loving service and respectful actions. One who is gentle in this sense will not attempt to push others around or arrogantly impose one’s own will on subordinates or peers.

But gentleness is not incompatible with decisive action and firm convictions.”⁶

B. Gentleness applied

1. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit which displays when one must bring correction

Gal 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.

- a. The spiritual man has authority
 - b. The spiritual man submits to God and displays gentleness in correcting error
2. Gentleness doesn't mean
 - a. No hard words are ever said
 - b. But that the hard words are said
 - 1) With restoration in view
 - 2) And with the goal of winning hearts, not exacting retribution

II. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control

A. Defining self-control

1. The Greeks saw self-control as a great virtue
 - a. Socrates saw it as a “cardinal” virtue
 - b. Aristotle devoted a whole section of a book to it
 - c. The Stoics likewise saw it as important, one of “the good” virtues (though subordinate to prudence/sound-mindedness)

“The concept of ἐγκράτεια [self-control], behind which stands the ideal of the free and independent man, of the man who is under no control but who freely controls all things and who in self-restraint maintains his freedom in

⁶ George, *Galatians*, 404.

face of the φαῦλαι ἡδοναί [ordinary pleasures] which would deprive him of it.”⁷

Polybius illustration: the general Scipio is given a virgin girl as a prize of war, but he gives the girl back to her father.

2. The term is rare in the New Testament

- a. Used here
- b. Acts 24.25

Ac 24.25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”

- c. 2 Pt 2.5-6

2 Pt 1.5-6 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

- d. Verb form used in 1Co 9.25

1 Cor 9.25-27 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;²⁷ but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

⁷ Walter Grundmann, “Ἐγκράτεια (Ἀκρασία), Ἐγκρατής (Ἀκρατής), Ἐγκρατεύομαι,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 340–41.

B. The Christian sense distinguished from the Greek sense

1. The Greeks pursued virtue for what it said of them
2. Paul pursued virtue (and urged us to) for what it says of Christ
 - a. We seek an imperishable crown
 - b. We run and fight with purpose: the goal is Christ
 - c. We discipline ourselves for the sake of the gospel

At least, that is the ideal, and if we are walking by the Spirit, it is real.

Conclusion:

As we close our discussion of the fruit of the Spirit, let's remember that we can't achieve the fruit production by our own strength.

- Shall we put rules on ourselves to control ourselves?
- Shall we employ "gentleness exercises" to be gentler?

We could ask the same questions about each way the fruit of the Spirit shows itself.

The problem is, if we discipline ourselves to produce these things, then it is the fruit of *us*, and not the fruit of the *Spirit*.

In other words, we are no different from the Greek Stoics if we pursue virtue in our own strength.

Instead, by faith, we rely on the Spirit and yield ourselves (and our members, Romans 6) to God.