

Gentleness in Adversity

Every commentary that I looked at, some of the best as far as language is concerned, rushes through these Christian virtues that we are to ‘put on.’ But this is where we live. This is how we are to live daily. These should characterize your life!

Colossians 3:12 Therefore put on, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

Today we are going to look at gentleness. This one is going to bother some of you. So, the best way to approach this is by looking at some Lexicons for what this Greek word means. The Greek word is *praotes*.

From The Complete WordStudy Dictionary of New Testament: (numbering is not part of this article) “primarily it:

- (1) does not denote outward expression of feeling but
- (2) inward grace of the soul, calmness toward God in particular.
- (3) It is the acceptance of God’s dealings with us considering them as good in that they enhance the closeness of our relationship with Him.
- (4) However, *praotes* encompasses expressing wrath toward the sin of man as demonstrated by the Lord Jesus (who indeed was called meek but expressed His anger toward those who were chiding Him because He had done good on the Sabbath day [Mark 3:5])

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

- (5) This meekness does not blame God for the persecution and evil doings of men.
- (6) It is not the result of weakness, and in the third beatitude it expresses not the passivity of the second beatitude but the activity of blessedness that exist in one's heart from being actively angry at evil.
- (7) According to Aristotle, *praotes* is that virtue that stands between two extremes, the uncontrolled and unjustified anger and not becoming angry at all no matter what takes place around you."

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 6, pages 645-650, "In Paul's debate with the Corinthians, it is worth noting that the term *praotes* occurs twice. Paul had full reason to inveigh (to speak or write about something with great hostility) against the Corinthians on account of their disputatiousness (incline to dispute or provoking debate and to be controversial) and arrogance." But, he preferred to bring the love of Christ to them in gentleness:

2 Corinthians 10:1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness (our word) of Christ—I who am meek (soft in words) when face to face with you, but bold (strong in words) toward you when absent! (Note here that this is a characteristic of Jesus Christ and therefore should characterize those who follow Him.)

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

To begin to grasp the understanding of this word, look at

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.

Brethren, believers

even if anyone believer

is caught in any trespass, this can be correctly understood in two circumstances: first this person is actually caught in sin, or it can refer to a believer who is ‘caught up’ in some trend of sin

you who are spiritual, Filling of the Holy Spirit plus an understanding from the Word of God

restore help them break from that sin and get back into the Filling of the Holy Spirit; only a believer can be restored into Filling of the Holy Spirit; the unbeliever is restored from his/her state as an unbeliever to a position in Christ; restored from position in Adam to new position in Christ.

such a one in a spirit of gentleness; this is our word and it enables the Spirit-filled believer to correct another believer in sin, “without arrogance, impatience or anger” Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 6, page 650

***each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.**

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

It is important to understand that this is given to every believer when they are Filled with the Holy Spirit for the ‘gentleness’ spoken of here as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of *gentleness* is our word. OK, all of these can be counterfeited in the energy of the flesh. But we are spiritually profited only when they flow from us from the power of the Holy Spirit. He produces them and we are rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ for allowing the Holy Spirit to pour His fruit into us and through us.

What is this ‘gentleness’ that is a characteristic of Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit pours in us when we are trusting in Him?

- I. This is something that goes on in our minds. It is a thought process. We saw last week how humility is a mindset where we examine ourselves in reference to God and to Jesus Christ. Well, gentleness is also a mindset – a way of thinking toward God and about God.
- II. Do not misunderstand this word by its designation: gentleness. It is based on correctly understanding righteousness and unrighteousness. It knows what is sin, what is an abomination to God, what is evil in the human race.

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

III. Knowing these things about unrighteousness causes various responses in the souls of believers. We can be prone to being very angry toward these and toward those who practice these unrighteous acts. Because we know better we can also become very arrogant that we do not practice them. And we can become most impatient toward those who do, who will not quickly abandon these horrible sins of unrighteousness. Here is where ‘gentleness’ comes in. By the power of the Holy Spirit we do not lash out at them, we do not become angry toward them, and we do not become impatient toward them. Instead, we express the righteousness of God to them and how what they are doing is not in keeping with the righteousness of God, and even warn them of impending dangers of continuing such a life style. Let’s say someone is an adulterer, fornicator, Muslim, homosexual, habitual liar, alcoholic, etc. Because of gentleness of the Holy Spirit, we do not react in anger or in disgust, but in righteousness or even in righteous indignation.

IV. This is a correct understanding of 1 Cor. 13 in describing the impact of Spiritual Love

1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

V. This is also a correct understanding of the application in our lives of

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother bel who leads an unruly life and not according to the teaching which you received from us.

And

Verse 14 (2 Thessalonians 3:14) If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

So, we are to know the truth, we are to rejoice in the truth, and we are not to associate — continual fellowship with those who ‘**practice,**’ that is live, a life style that is in opposition with a lifestyle prescribed by God. And here is where the fruit of the Holy Spirit of gentleness comes in. How do you separate from these believers? Because of gentleness in your thinking you do not become angry at them, you do not start shouting at them and condemning them. You quietly stay away from them. And if they come to you and ask why? Here is where you give them a soft answer! You quietly share with them the Word of God and point out to them that they have chosen to live in a lifestyle that is contradictory to

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

that which you wish to live. You may make it clear that you are not perfect but that your lifestyle, your mindset is to live a life that is pleasing to God. You do not hate them, you are not angry with them, you simply prefer to associate with those who also strive to live a life pleasing to God. And if they are so inclined, you will be more than happy to help them come out of that lifestyle and live a life pleasing to God where there is inner peace and inner joy from the Holy Spirit. This is also a correct understanding and application of

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.

Tempted to what? To becoming judgmental, angry, impatient or self-righteous.

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, (caused by their sin pattern) and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

And what is the Law of Christ? According to Rom. 8:2 and James 1:25 and 2:12 it is learning to live under the Law of Liberty. But, even this comes with warning:

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

**an opportunity for the flesh, but through love
serve one another.**

Sometimes I think we forget just how important the freedom we have in Christ really is:

**Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set
us free; therefore keep standing firm and do
not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.**

Whittaker Chambers best describes the need of freedom: “Freedom is a need of the soul, and nothing else. ...”

One of the reasons that God made ‘gentleness’ a part of the richness of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is that it is often so difficult for some believers to realize just how difficult it is to change one’s life, from sinner to saint, from Muslim to Christianity, from homosexuality to straightness of life; from anything to Jesus Christ. Again, Whittaker Chambers best describes what we are asking these people to do. “Tragedy occurs when a human soul awakes and seeks, in suffering and pain, to free itself from crime, violence, infamy, even at the cost of life. The struggle is the tragedy - not defeat or death. That is why the spectacle of tragedy has always filled men, not with despair, but with a sense of hope and exaltation. (pp. 4-5 of Witness)

Oh, people we must grasp the dynamics of ‘gentleness’ in our lives.

VI. But there is another circumstance of gentleness, the very opposite of the one we have been examining. Church history is saturated with persecution and filled with martyrs who took their

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

suffering in strength from God and the absence of anger toward their persecutors. During a persecution of Christians in Lyons, Gaul (modern day France) while Christians were tortured on August 1, 177 AD the people roared for the blood of Christians.

“The torturers placed some Christians in stocks; they placed others on a red hot-iron grill. After torture, they took some of the Christians to the amphitheater for wild beasts to devour as the crowd watched. Among that group was the slave girl Blandina, who had already endured every imaginable torture and cruelty. She was suspended on a stake and exposed to the wild beasts. Because she appeared to be hanging on a cross, she inspired the other Christians. When they looked at her they were reminded that Christ was crucified for them and that everyone who suffered for Christ's glory would enjoy eternal fellowship with him.

**In the midst of her pain and suffering Blandina cried out, "I am a Christian and there is nothing vile done by us." Although the crowd detested the Christians, they had to admit that they had never seen a woman endure so many terrible tortures. She died comparing her death to marriage since she was going to her bridegroom, Christ.”
(Christianity.com)**

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

As we have seen ‘gentleness’ is the acceptance of God’s dealings with us – considering them as good in that they enhance the closeness of our relationship with Him. These martyrs in Lyons in AD 177 did not shout out obscenities to their persecutors but they directed their thinking to their relationship with the Lord. A more modern example of this situation of gentleness is the life and sufferings of Richard Wurmbrand at the hands of the Communists. For 14 years, he kept on praying for his torturers. Here again Whittaker Chambers: “Life is not worth living for which a man is not prepared to die at any moment.”

And God, through the Holy Spirit has given to every believer the attitude of gentleness when his freedom or life are in jeopardy.

We should be ready at any moment to give a defense for our beliefs.

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1 Peter 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

The word *gentleness* is in the domain of our word meaning this starts with an inner mindset but expresses itself by not lashing out in anger or impatience or arrogance toward those to whom you are giving a defense.

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

VII. The Holy Spirit will not always give us the mindset of ‘gentleness’ in the presence of rejection of God’s plan. The case in point here is Jesus Christ Himself:

Mark 3:1 He (Jesus Christ) entered again into a synagogue; (at Capernaum) and a man was there whose hand was withered.

Mark 3:2 They (religious crowd) were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

Mark 3:3 He *said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!”

Mark 3:4 And He *said to them, (the religious crowd) “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent. (Did not want to answer Him)

Mark 3:5 After looking around at them with anger,

OK, this is the opposite of gentleness, but *orge* as we have it here is also a mental attitude toward unrighteousness. The problem here is that this can be sin, but it can also be righteous indignation. Aristotle says that *orge* anger is ‘desire with grief’ and note the next word in

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

Mark 3:5 with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He *said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. (Note carefully that this is going on in the soul of Jesus Christ — it is His mindset, not followed up by any action toward the religious crowd.)

Mark 3:6 The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians (Jews against Jesus and for Rome) against Him, (Jesus Christ) *as to* how they might destroy Him.

VIII. We have seen that gentleness is a mental thought process that does not lash out at others but does seek to help others if they desire the help but offered without being angry or impatient or arrogance. We have seen that gentleness accepts all that happens to them as from God for their own ‘good’. But we must add to this that this gentleness from the Holy Spirit does not blame God for suffering from the world or from their own failures.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

And it is this fruit of the Holy Spirit of gentleness that does not blame or attack God.

And while we are here in James 1 look at

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; (and a mental attitude of gentleness helps every believer to persevere when under trial) for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

This crown is received at the Judgment Seat of Christ. So, beside all the benefits of gentleness in your life, in your marriage, in your local church etc. gentleness also helps to receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, at which every believer must stand after the Rapture.

IX. Gentleness is absolutely necessary in getting along with one another.

Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, (mental attitude of humility from the Holy Spirit) implore you to walk (live as in daily habit) in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness,...

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

This is beautiful, here are the same two words that we have in Col. 3:12 *humility and gentleness*. Both these words describe a mental attitude that every believer is to ‘put on’ in their souls and cannot be accomplished in the flesh but demand being fulfilled in the power of the Holy Spirit. You will recall that humility is an attitude in which you compare yourself with God or with Jesus Christ, not with other humans. Gentleness is a mental attitude toward God and your relationship with God. What is so important here is the context. The context is our interrelationships with other believers; this starts at home, between husband and wife, family and moves to the local church; work, social life etc. Don’t let anyone deceive you, it is tough to get along with other believers, especially those closest to us and those whom we expect goodness from in the local church. These believers will let us down, at home, at church, at work in life in general. They are going to say things and do things and not do things that will cause our flesh nature to rise up in antagonism, anger and impatience. Remember “familiarity breeds contempt”. So, it is no accident that Paul in striving at peaceful unity between believers, stresses humility and gentleness. This Greek word is used primarily in context of adversity, conflict, suffering.

People, there are going to be people in any assembly where you are going to encounter someone whose personality just rubs you the wrong way. Not to mention their sin pattern. There are going to be people, other believers who you know are saved and in the Plan of God, beloved by God but your flesh nature is aroused every time you see them. So, what are we to do? Oh, I know, change churches!!! Ha!! The mystery is on you, for you will find them at the new local church! And you will run into them at work or in social life etc. Oh, so you just decide, not to

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

marry and get a job working on your computer at home and become a hermit. I got news for you...God...Satan...will put a thorn in your flesh and you are now back at square one. Well, what are we supposed to do? Under these circumstances how can we preserve peace and unity? God the Father is ahead of you. He has supplied you with the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and He has made two of the fruits, gifts of the Holy Spirit: humility and gentleness.

So

Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk (live as in daily habit) in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

Do you see the context of the call for ‘gentleness?’ — Getting along with one another; at home, at work, in the local church.

showing tolerance for one another and yes this refers to one another of the same kind, that is other believers. People will from time to time just get on our nerves. In some cases, it is the same person all the time!! This is when it is really tough.

Showing tolerance The Greek word is picturesque here; to hold back — as rain, holding back from coming down. So, this gift of the Holy Spirit causes us to ‘hold back’ anger, resentment, jealousy, antagonism, that is

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

aroused in our flesh nature. So, we immediately get back into the power of the Holy Spirit by faith and He will pour into your soul, into your thinking, a correct thinking about yourself and your relationship with God and then your relationship with others who are in the beloved. But, little sarcastic remarks like ‘I don’t see how God can love them’ does not cause you to stay in the domain of the Holy Spirit. And by the way, what makes you so wonderful that God should love you? Ha Ha! Back to gentleness when confronted with other believers in your trying to please God and maintain peace between believers.

But we have one more word to look at that we skipped:

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, oh, you will love this: The Greek word *makrothumos* is the first part of Spiritual Love in 1 Cor. 13: **Spiritual Love is Longsuffing**. Isn’t it interesting that the first impact of Spiritual Love is that Spiritual Love is ‘longsuffering.’ You know what that means? That means that in love, in relationships with others, we are going to suffer and Spiritual Love enables us to be longsuffering. If this is someone close, husband and wife, family the “long” means throughout your life. If this is someone at the local church, the long means, just the few hours you are with that person! But Spiritual Love is longsuffering, which means that Spiritual Love suffers long without getting out of fellowship with Holy Spirit or with that person, without giving in to anger, or jealousy or wrath or revenge etc. We will be studying the impact of Spiritual Love on early Sunday morning.

**Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and
gentleness, with longsuffering, showing**

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

tolerance for one another in love (that is in
Spiritual Love)

**Ephesians 4:3 being diligent to preserve the unity of
the Spirit in the bond of peace**

being diligent this refers to you, to you being diligent. The Greek word means just that, being diligent, which means you make every effort to remain in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. You are not occupied with that other believer so much as you are conscious of your responsibility to the Lord.

to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace Many local churches have been tormented by struggles between believers. If we abide in the Holy Spirit, we will handle problems with others in the assembly by a mental attitude of gentleness. And the same applies to family's and wherever we go.

X. We are to pursue gentleness

**1 Timothy 6:11 But flee from these things, you
man of God, and pursue righteousness,
godliness, faith, love, perseverance and
gentleness.**

How do we pursue these virtues of the Christian? By walking/living by faith in the Holy Spirit, for these are fruit of the Holy Spirit

XI. Gentleness is necessary for the pastor-teacher

Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12

2 Timothy 2:24 The Lord's bond-servant (pastor-teacher) **must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,** (Spiritual Love does not take into account when wronged)

2 Timothy 2:25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition,...

Once again, the context of this Greek word is in the midst of controversy, or difficulty. The pastor-teacher is not to be arrogant or angry or impatient with those in the assembly, but is to maintain a mental attitude toward God of his responsibilities and realize that he cannot control anyone as to how they think...so in gentleness he corrects their thinking, with the Word of God...

2 Timothy 2:25 ...if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

XII. The pastor-teacher is to teach all how to 'get along' with others.

Titus 3:1 Remind them (repetition, repetition in his teaching) **to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient,** (respect of all authority) **to be ready for every good deed,**

**Gentleness in Adversity
Colossians 3:12**

Titus 3:2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, (this is our word, gentleness), showing every consideration for all men.

Gentleness is a characteristic of Jesus Christ and therefore if you wish to imitate Christ we are to love as He loved, with humility and with gentleness especially in controversies and difficulties in our interaction with others.

But remember, your decision is not to be characterized by gentleness but to trust the Holy Spirit to pour this into you!