

# Milk & Honey

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*Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ*

## Gentleness (Meekness) The Fruit Of The Spirit

Bob Gessner

In Galatians 5 there are listed nine characteristics of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The eighth one listed in verse 23 is meekness or gentleness. This is indeed a characteristic that is little valued or appreciated today. This word appears in eight other verses in the New Testament. Let us examine these verses so that we gain greater insight into this unique characteristic of a Spirit-filled Christian.

1. 1 Cor. 4:21 - "Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?" It is obvious in raising this question that Paul preferred to exercise gentleness among his fellow believers rather than severity. On the other hand, this verse presents a very vital point at the beginning of our study. Although gentleness is a desirable trait in the believer, it cannot always be applied. There are times when severity is needed instead of gentleness. Parents, elders, and others who are responsible for guidance and learning must know when the gentleness of the Spirit can be appropriately applied.

2. 2 Cor. 10:1 - "I am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ..." This verse makes a very clear point. The characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 are also the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we to be meek and gentle? Was the Lord Jesus also meek and gentle? He said of Himself, "I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). There were times when He was very severe with the Pharisees and others who were disobedient to the Word of God. But He was never, never self-assertive or self-promoting; nor did He seek to defend Himself against the unjust accusations of others.

3. Gal. 6:1 - "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." This verse specifies that gentleness or meekness is a trait of spiritual maturity. It is also to be noted that this does not mean we are overlooking the sin of a brother. That would not restore him, but would rather allow him to continue in the sin. But we do not harshly deal with him so that he is driven to despair or coldly dismiss him so that he feels to-

tally rejected. A manner of gentleness will give the sinning brother a hope of recovery and a desire to be helped by one whom he knows really cares for him.

4. Eph. 4:2,3 - "...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness with longsuffering....endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Harshness with our fellow brethren promotes disunity; gentleness promotes unity. Paul stressed this point in Philippians 2 when he exhorted his brethren to be of one accord and of one mind. He stressed that in lowliness of mind each one should esteem others better than himself. "The lowliness and meekness that make nothing of self lead to longsuffering and forbearance with others. We may find at times that others are not always lowly and meek, and this will call for longsuffering. We may have to suffer rebuffs and insults, and have to bear with those who act in this way. We are warned that the forbearance is to be exercised in love. It is possible to bear with much in the spirit of pride that treats an offending brother with contempt. If we have to be silent let it be with love that grieves over unworthy conduct." (Hamilton Smith)

5. Col. 3:10,12 - "...put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness or gentleness, longsuffering." It is clear in this portion that gentleness is a characteristic of the new man in Christ. One of the outstanding traits of the new man is gentleness. Becoming angry with another brother is a reaction of the old nature and describes our behavior before our conversion. After we come to Christ we become fitted with a new way to react to those who offend us. Gentleness is a part of the new creation in which God is transforming us to be like Christ.

6. 1 Tim. 6:11 - "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." It is challenging to note that the final pursuit for the man of God is gentleness. This would be a striking example of how the last is certainly not the least to be desired. If the other pursuits are truly experienced, gentleness or meekness must be the outcome. The more the man of God experiences the dynamics of life in Christ, the more he is yielded to God, bringing about a spirit of humility or gentleness in his life.

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## The Bible: A Completely Unique Book

Carl Knott

*Continued from last month*

### **It Is The Source Of All True Wisdom**

Verse 15 in our text (2 Tim. 3) says that the Holy Scriptures are “able to make thee wise.” Many people seek knowledge and wisdom outside of the Bible, and are willing to believe anything, no matter how strange, except what the Bible says. This is why the world is in such a sad condition today; because mankind has rejected God’s Word, the true wisdom, and “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). You don’t have to be wise before you can read the Bible and understand it, but if you read it reverently and with faith, it is able to make you wise. Universities cannot do that. They fill heads with philosophy, and teach every law known to man except the law of sin and death. Man’s wisdom, the wisdom of this world, is scorned by God, and the wisdom of this world is useless in the things of God. Romans 1:21 shows what was the condition of mankind when it began to profess to be wise, “...became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Verses 28 and 29a continue the description of the mind of these self-proclaimed wise men: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness...” In 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 Paul recounts how when he went to Corinth to preach the Gospel, he expressly rejected “the enticing words of man’s wisdom...that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” Many who imagine themselves to be evangelists and workers who fulfill the Great Commission today need to reflect on the apostle’s words and judge their own use of worldly wisdom, tactics of entertainment or marketing, to attract and win souls. What are they winning souls from, and what are they winning them to, when they use man’s wisdom? Certainly not to the Christ of the Bible! Paul was well aware of what different groups like Jews and Greeks sought after, but he did not adapt his message to them. “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor.1:23-24). Man’s wisdom does not mix with God’s, and is useless, and worse than useless: dangerous, in the work of the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 declares:

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a

that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”

Nothing is said about appreciating or admiring the thoughts of the so-called wise, those whom the world calls great thinkers, philosophers, etc. God knows their thoughts, and appraises them as vain, which means empty, without value, useless. The spiritually minded person has no reason to admire, envy or acquire this “wisdom of men.” Again in Colossians 2:8 the apostle Paul warns believers about the wisdom of the world. After reminding us in verse 3 that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and warning us in verse 4 not to let men deceive us by enticing words, he says: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

This is a fundamental lesson and truth that must be accepted and remembered, that the wisdom of this world is not compatible with God’s wisdom, and God’s wisdom is given to us in His Word, the Bible. Proverbs 1:7 reminds us that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” One day in family devotions, after reading this verse, I asked my children if they knew what it meant. There was a pause, so I continued, “What does the word beginning mean?” One of the younger children replied, “It’s the first part of the trip.” Out of the mouths of babes! Yes, it could be expressed in other ways, but he had the right idea. It is the first step, not an option or accessory to be added on later to round out our knowledge. In Psalm 119:98-100 the psalmist delights in the wisdom that he has acquired by meditating on God’s Word and allowing it to guide him. He testifies that God has made him wiser than his enemies, he has more understanding than all his teachers and the ancients, because he meditates on and keeps the precepts of God’s Word. This is acquired wisdom, and it comes through paying attention to the Book that God has given us. Psalm 19:7 says that God’s Word makes the simple person wise, which of course would be impossible if the Bible contained errors. The Lord Jesus Christ declared in John 17:17, “...thy word is truth.” He confirmed the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament often in His ministry, and promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them to complete the revelation of God in the New Testament, when He said that the Spirit of Truth would teach them “all things” and guide them into “all truth” (John 14:26; 16:13). The words “all” and “all truth” in these two texts are very important. These verses mean that there would be no later revelation, not

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# My Psalm - Psalm 91

William MacDonald

Brother William MacDonald refers to Psalm 91 as “My Psalm.” In his book on the Psalms (published by Walterick Publishers in 1977), he told the following story to explain why this Psalm was his Psalm. In 1922, in the Western Hebrides, a five-year-old lad was dying of diphtheria. A mucous membrane was forming across his throat, and breathing was becoming increasingly difficult. His Christian mother turned her back so she would not see him take his last breath. At that very moment there was a knock at the door. It was her brother-in-law from an adjoining village. He said, “I’ve just come to tell you that you don’t have to worry about the child. He is going to recover, and one day God is going to save his soul.” She was distracted and incredulous: “Whatever makes you say that?” Then he explained he had been sitting at his fire reading Psalm 91 when God distinctly spoke to him through the last three verses. The very last verse reads: “With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.” Brother MacDonald was that boy. God delivered him from death that night and saved his soul twelve years later. God gave Him a long and fruitful life. So you will understand why he referred to Psalm 91 as “my Psalm.” On Christmas day, 2007, the Lord took Brother MacDonald home.

This is a Messianic Psalm. Its primary interpretation concerns our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to study it from that perspective, but all the while remembering that in a lesser way, we may appropriate its precious promises to ourselves.

All the rivers of Thy grace, I claim;  
Over every promise write my name.

It seems that the Holy Spirit’s voice is heard in verses 3-13, assuring the Lord Jesus of the tremendous security that was His because of His life of perfect trust. What are these guarantees of security? There are nine: (1) Deliverance from hidden dangers (v.3) (2) Immunity from the fatal disease (v.3) (3) Shelter and refuge in the Almighty (v.4) (4) Protection in the faithfulness of God (v.4) (5) Freedom from fear (vv.5,6) (6) Safety even in the midst of massacre (vv.7,8) (7) Insurance against calamity (vv.9,10) (8) Guarded by angelic escort (vv.11,12) (9) Victory over the lion and cobra (v.13).

It is interesting that Satan stopped before coming to this verse 13 (Matt. 4:6). If he had quoted it, he would have been describing his own doom. The devil is presented in Scripture as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) and as an ancient serpent (Rev. 12:9). As a lion, he is the loud, horrendous per-

secutor using physical violence. As a serpent, he employs wily stratagems to deceive and to destroy.

And so the Holy Spirit has given nine guarantees of safe-conduct to the Son of Man during His life of perfect trust and obedience on earth. At this point God the Father confirms the guarantees by six tremendous “I wills” (14-16). In these there is a suggestion of the entire career of the Man Christ Jesus: His spotless life on earth (14); His suffering for sins (15); His resurrection and ascension (15); His present session at God’s right hand and His coming kingdom (16).

How can we reconcile all these promises of safe-keeping for the Messiah with the fact that men ultimately did put Him to death? And if we apply the Psalm to believers today, how does it square with the fact that some of them do succumb to disease, or fall in battle, or die in plane crashes?

Part of the answer, at least, lies in this. The one who trusts in Jehovah is immortal until his work is done. Jesus said as much to His disciples. When He suggested returning to Judea, the disciples said, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You; and are You going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him” (John 11:7-10). The Lord knew that the Jews could not touch Him until He had finished His work. And this is true of every believer; he is kept by the power of God through faith.

Then the Lord may speak to a believer in a special, personal way through some verse of this Psalm. If He does, the person can claim the promise and rely on it. The personal incident at the beginning illustrates this.

And finally, it is true in a general way that those who trust the Lord are sure of His protection. We may tend to overemphasize the exceptions. The general rule is still true: there is safety in the Lord. \*

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**And that from a child thou hast known  
the holy scriptures, which are able to  
make thee wise unto salvation through  
faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

**2 Timothy 3:15**

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in the Koran, nor the Book of Mormon, nor through visions to catholic "saints," nor through visions, apparitions and "words of wisdom" of charismatics and pentecostals who say "the Lord told me" and speak of their dreams, visions, and revelations. Psychology and philosophy cannot be added to God's Word as part of the truth, saying "all truth is God's truth." The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) declared that Roman Catholic "tradition" is also God's Word, equal to the written Scriptures, but this is once again how this false church usurps God's authority, and indeed she must, because without her traditions she has no reason for being nor way to explain all the things that she has added to and taken from God's Word. Although God reveals Himself to mankind in a general way through His creation (Psa.19:1; Rom.1:19-20), this is a general testimony to His existence, glory, divine power and godhead. But apart from this, all divinely revealed and inspired truth is contained in the Bible, and outside the Bible there is none. There are no worldly sources of God's Word, and no worldly additions are allowed. True wisdom is found in the Bible.

We search the world for truth. We cull  
The good, the true, the beautiful,  
From graven stone and written scroll,  
And dusty archives of the soul;  
And, weary seekers of the best,  
We come back laden from our quest,  
To find that all the sages said,  
Is in the Book our mothers read.

John Greenleaf Whittier

*To be Continued Next Month*

## Continued from page 1 - *Gentleness (Meekness)*

7. 2 Tim. 2:24,25 - "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility or gentleness correcting those who are in opposition...." A servant who is loud, boisterous, forward, arrogant, and argumentative is not a good servant. "It is difficult sometimes to be faithful to the truth without becoming quarrelsome. We are not to be contentious, manifesting a bad spirit about right things; but we are to be characterized by the spirit of grace even as we stand firmly for the Word of God" (H. A. Ironside).

8. Titus 3:2 - "To speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility (gentleness, courtesy) to all men." Bill MacDonald states, "we should be gentle. It is hard to think about this quality without thinking of the Lord Jesus. He was mild-mannered and kind, peaceful and conciliatory. And we should show all humility, or courtesy, to all men. It seems so proper that courtesy should be taught as one of the Christian virtues. Essentially it means humbly thinking of others, putting others first, and saying and doing the gracious thing. Courtesy serves others before self, jumps at opportunities to assist, and expresses prompt appreciation for kindnesses received. It is never crude, vulgar, or rude."

May this fruit of the Spirit be manifested in us more and more. \*

## Milk & Honey Information

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