

### Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.<sup>24</sup> And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

The next spiritual “fruit” is that of “gentleness” which is the Greek word “*prautēs*”. It is a word that is only used nine times in the New Testament and comes from the Greek root word “*praus*” which is only used three times in the New Testament. The root word “*praus*” simply means mild, gentle, meek, humble.<sup>1</sup> For instance, [Matthew 5:5](#) says,

Mt 5:5 (NKJV) **Blessed *are* the meek (“*praus*”), for they shall inherit the earth.**

[1 Peter 3:4](#), speaking of the spirit of a wife, says,

1Pe 3:4 (NKJV) **rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle (“*praus*”) and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**

At first glance, it would seem that what the word “gentleness” is addressing is someone’s outward behavior in relation to other individuals, but that is not the case. Obviously, it certainly should impact our relationship with other people, but that simply is not the thrust of its meaning. The meaning refers to an inward work of God’s grace in the soul and the expressions of that grace are primarily directed towards God.<sup>2</sup> Stated another way, the believer who has this attribute is very grateful for how God has worked in their life. When someone looks at their life they do not see someone who is constantly dissatisfied and complaining about every little thing in their life that they may not like. For instance, [James 1:21](#) says,

Jas 1:21 (NKJV) **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness (“*prautes*”) the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

I.e., the believer spoken of here receives the Word of God with grace, with meekness. They let it speak to their life. They embrace it for their life. They cling to God’s truth as if their life depended on it.

[1 Peter 3:15](#) says,

1Pe 3:15 (NKJV) **But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness (“*prautes*”) and fear;**

The deeper meaning and application of this word is best defined by Dr. Zodhiates when he says, “*It is that attitude of spirit where we accept God's dealings with us as good and do not dispute or resist.*”<sup>3</sup> The more disputing and resisting that someone is inclined to express and to demonstrate in their life is simply evidence that this quality of “meekness” needs to be developed in their life. God will always, so mark it down that God will always bring people into our life that will test every single one of these fruits of the Spirit. These people or circumstances over which we may absolutely have no control will irritate

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *praus*, #4098, ep.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 1209.

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, 1209.

us, exasperate us, trouble us, confuse us, annoy us, and aggravate us to a point where we want to just speak our mind to them and tell them exactly what we think about them. These are what test us. This is how God works. They are God's instrument to reveal to us exactly where we are spiritually and whether or not we are more than willing to allow Him to bring these kinds of people into our life without our constant complaining and whining about how they may have treated us.

When the actual grace of God is truly at work in the believer's life, there is no inclination to whine and complain about these people. The believer truly sees them as one of God's tools to create character in them. The key idea in understanding what is being addressed here for the believer's insight and encouragement is the bad habit of feeling compelled to "complain". I.e., do we find ourselves constantly complaining about anything and everything that simply does not go as we wanted it to go? Are we always finding fault in others without allowing God to address our personal lives? That is probably the norm for most people. We rarely ever think that we were at fault. Our tendency is to always be placing ourselves, our opinions, and our decisions above that of others. Do we find ourselves always analyzing and scrutinizing how and why something happened, or are we content to simply let God bring certain people and circumstances into our life as His means of deepening our character and helping us to constantly become more Christlike? Please appreciate that Jesus said this about Himself in [Matthew 11:29](#),

**Mt 11:29 (NKJV) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

There is not one ounce of weakness or softness in that remark. Jesus was never feeble and frail or weakly with anything that happened to Him – most of which was generally unpleasant. In fact, he knew exactly what He had been called to do and He never one time fainted in the face of what was going to take place. What this verse reveals is that Jesus was full of great power in His life. It reveals that He knew and fully understood that He possessed all of the infinite resources of God at His simple command.<sup>4</sup> He had so much spiritual power that it defies our understanding, but He never used it except to glorify His Father – never. He was so powerful in His Spirit which was fully committed to His Father's will that no one could upset Him or disrupt His life. No one could threaten Him. No one could frighten Him. No one could intimidate Him. Listen to this dialogue that Jesus had with Pilate in [John 19:5-12](#). This is great!

**Jn 19:5 (NKJV) Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."<sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,<sup>9</sup> and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.<sup>10</sup> Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."<sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release Him..."**

<sup>4</sup> Vine, 728.

Jesus was not afraid of Pilate, his false sense of power, or his threats - but Pilate was afraid. Jesus said this in [John 10:19](#) when speaking to the Pharisees,

**Jn 10:18 (NKJV) No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."**

He was always full of strength because He was “**gentle and lowly in heart**”. This is the idea of meekness – strength in quietness, strength in trusting, strength in knowing to Whom we belong. Jesus knew exactly from where His strength always came, and He constantly placed Himself under His Father’s divine authority and direction. He never acted independently to accomplish what He wanted, but was so fully committed to God’s will for His life that no one or anything could keep Him from doing what He knew His Father wanted Him to do.

This has got to become the believer’s same attitude, the believer’s same way of life, the believer’s same approach to everything that he does. Jesus knew exactly how His Father wanted Him to live, and He never deviated from it. Even at the age of twelve He knew that He had to “**be about His Father’s business**”. Everything in His life revolved around doing what He knew His Father wanted Him to do. This is the eighth of nine attributes that have been studied so far, and one of the key truths that has been learned by studying each of these spiritual fruits collectively is that they represent what it is that God is doing in the believer’s life. This is the spiritual fruit that the Holy Spirit is working on in every believer’s life all the time. There is no spiritual respite from this work in us. These attributes are what the believer has to realize the Holy Spirit is concentrating on in their life. What has been seen is that it is not that He is only working on one at a time, but that He is working on each one of these all the time – from love to longsuffering to faithfulness to self-control. God is addressing each one of these all the time in every believer’s life.

Now, no believer can escape this dilemma of being spiritually tested that was mentioned earlier and that so often occurs in our life - and sometimes without any warning. [Ephesians 4:2](#) quickly comes to mind, and says,

**Eph 4:2 (NKJV) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,**

Every believer is called on by God to persevere in relationships with “**gentleness**”, with “**longsuffering**” at times, and we have to “**bear with one another**”. The word “**bearing with**” is the Greek word “*anecho*” and means to hold back, to restrain, to stop. The heart of the word is that it means to have patience with people in regards to the errors and bad decisions they may make that impact us personally.<sup>5</sup> [Colossians 3:13](#) says it this way,

**Col 3:13 (NKJV) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**

Notice how clear that verse is in relation to “**bearing with one another**” when you may have a “**complaint against**” them for something they did that displeased you. The word “**complaint**” means that you actually have a very legitimate grievance with someone. However, the issue for the believer is

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, 171.

that God tempers all of that with forgiveness. Just move on past the fault, past the complaint, past the blame – just move on. Why? It is because the ground of our forgiveness is that we have been forgiven for every fault that we have committed against Christ.

Listen very carefully. Every committed believer has to accept the fact that every part of their life is under God’s careful and constant scrutiny, and the more committed that they are to Him, the greater the degree of change that He will make in them. Most people think that it is the opposite – that God has to work more with the uncommitted, but that is not the case. The deeper work of God is constantly being addressed in those who are more than willing to allow God to change them, to adjust different areas of their life, and to work at more profound levels than the uncommitted and indifferent believer. After we look at the attribute of “**self-control**” in the next study, we will have to face the following statement by Paul in v24 which says,

**Gal 5:24 (NKJV) And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

The verb “**have crucified**” is in the indicative mood, aorist tense, active voice which speaks of a very specific choice that the believer made in their life in the past – that they would not live for themselves. This will be a very convicting verse for anyone who has to always have things their way. The verse will not let an uncommitted believer regarding God’s will become comfortable in their resistance to what He wants for their life. I am personally convinced that the reason that people who need to change do not change is because they really do not want to change. They like themselves, they like the way they are, they like the way that they think. They simply are NOT committed to God’s very best for their life and for some unfortunate reason have convinced themselves that they know more than God knows – which obviously they do not. God’s will, God’s law is perfect and [Psalm 119:7](#) says that it converts the soul, changes the soul.

**Ps 19:7 (NKJV) The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;**

It is very interesting that the opposite of this word “*prautēs*” for “**gentleness**” is the Greek word “*orge*” which speaks of a disposition and inclination to anger. What that says is that the person who has this attribute of gentleness and meekness in their life is not inclined to anger. They have allowed the grace of God to work in them and to change their inclination and proneness to anger. In my mind personally, “**meekness**” is a quality that is generally thought of as a weakness in someone – not being aggressive, not standing up for yourself, allowing people to mistreat you and say things about you. However, in reality it is a quality of great strength. Any believer can allow someone to draw them into a nonsensical conflict, but the person who has this quality of meekness and gentleness is simply not prone to let that happen. They are godly in their minds and hearts, and they know how to handle their emotions and simply walk away from something unpleasant and even hurtful at times. They are not willing to continue pursuing an issue that has no merit. They are not worried about always having to defend themselves regarding every little issue that happens in their life. They are able to keep conflict in perspective so that they do not get pulled into it. They know how to walk away, how to manage their emotions, and how to

let God protect them. This quality is a part of the believer's imitation of Christ. It is a fusion of gentleness with a calm obedience to the perfect will of God for their life and with the "**mind of Christ**".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Furness, 102.