



## BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS ... GENTLENESS/MEEKNESS ...

### COMMENTARY ON "GENTLENESS/MEEKNESS":

- ▶ ★★★★★ **Gentleness (Gr. πραῦτης, prātēs).** This word connotes a submissive and teachable spirit toward God that manifests itself in genuine humility and consideration toward others. **It is regrettable that the English word "gentleness" has come to have the popular connotation of a wimpish weakness and non-assertive 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.** It was after all "gentle Jesus meek and mild" who expelled the mercenaries from the temple with a scourge because of their obstinate defilement of his Father's house. [George, T. (1994). *Galatians* (Vol. 30, p. 404). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]
- ▶ **πραῦτης**, "gentleness," is the Koine spelling of the classical word πραότης, which was used

by Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek classical writers to signify "mildness" or "gentleness" in dealing with people. Aristotle, in particular, defined it as **the mean between the extremes of an "excessive anger" (ὀργιλότης) and the "inability to be angry"** ... Here at the start of v 23 Paul undoubtedly means the latter, that of "considerateness" or "gentleness" toward others, which is **the opposite of an arrogant and self-assertive spirit.** [Longenecker, R. N. (1998). *Galatians* (Vol. 41, pp. 262–263). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.]

- ▶ **5:23 πραῦτης, 'gentleness',** is defined by Aristotle (Eth. Nic. 2.1108a) as **the mean between excessive proneness to anger (ὀργιλότης) and incapacity for anger (ἀοργησία).** Moses was πραῦς σφόδρα, 'very gentle' (Nu. 12:3), in the sense that, in face of undeserved criticism, he did not give way to rage but rather interceded with God for the offenders. Jesus was 'gentle (πραῦς) and lowly in heart' (Mt. 11:29) but was perfectly capable of indignation (Mk. 3:5). [Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 254–255). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans

• John R. W. Stott ... the "deadly feud" ... **it should be even clearer to us than before that 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit' are in active conflict with one another. They are pulling in opposite directions.** There exists between the two 'an interminable, deadly feud'. This is the Christian conflict—fierce, bitter and unremitting. Moreover, it is a conflict in which by himself the Christian simply cannot be victorious. ... 'Is that the whole story?' some perplexed reader will be asking. 'Is the tragic confession that "I cannot do what I want to do" the last word about a Christian's inner moral conflict? Is this all Christianity offers—an experience of continuous defeat?' Indeed, it is not. If we were left to ourselves, we could not do what we would; instead, we would succumb to the desires of our old nature. But if we 'walk by the Spirit' (verse 16), then we shall not gratify the desires of the flesh. We shall still experience them, but we shall not indulge them. On the contrary, we shall bear the fruit of the Spirit. [Stott, J. R. W. (1986). *The message of Galatians: Only one way* (p. 149). Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

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- ▶ Paul entreats the Corinthians 'by the meekness (πραῦτης) and gentleness (ἐπιείκεια) of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:1), but if the words that follow that entreaty are an expression of meekness and gentleness, one wonders what he would have said had he been unrestrained by these qualities. **(There, as here, Paul's affectionate concern for his converts is matched by his fierce denunciation of those who troubled them.)** [Ibid.]
- ▶ Gentleness. Prautēs includes the idea of gentleness, but is usually better translated meekness. In his helpful volume *Synonyms of the New Testament*, **R. C. Trench writes that prautēs does not consist in a person's "outward behavior only; nor yet in his relations to his fellow-men; as little in his mere natural disposition. Rather it is an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting"**

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953). It is that humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while being free of any desire for revenge or retribution. In the New Testament prautēs is used to describe three attitudes: submissiveness to the will of God (Col. 3:12), teachableness (James 1:21), and consideration of others (Eph. 4:2). [MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Galatians* (p. 169). Chicago: Moody Press.]

- ▶ Ver. 23.—Meekness (πραότης). (On this, see last note.) **The humble submissiveness to the teachings of Divine revelation,** to which this term probably points, stands in contrast with that self-reliant, headstrong impetuosity which in the temperament of the Celt is apt to hurry him into the adoption of novel ideas which he has not taken the trouble seriously to weigh. It may, however, stand in antithesis to self-reliant arrogance in general. [Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Galatians* (p. 262). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.]