

# Promoting Peace, Patience, Gentleness

OT: Joel 2:23-32  
NT: Galatians 5:22

This week we continue our examination of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Last week we looked at the first three on this list of benefits of the Holy Spirit- Love, Joy and Kindness. Now we look at the next three- Peace, Patience, Gentleness. These three have a special connection with each other.

Shalom, Salem, Pax, and peace all have a similar idea. It is much more than the absence of war. It is a state of wellbeing. Peace can be achieved even in the middle of turmoil. The presence of the Holy Spirit brings that peace even apart from circumstances. It also effects how we deal with others. Someone who is at peace with themselves will treat others with patience and gentleness. Those who are violent, impatient, and cruel usually have a problem with themselves. The adage that “you must first love yourself before you can love others” can apply here. Martin Luther King Jr. adopted a nonviolent approach that changed the world because good people were won over to his just cause. By being patient with one another and treating others with gentleness we can change the world.

What should the lives of those who are free in Christ look like? In other word, how should Christians live if we are not under the law of Moses?

Paul has answered that question in two ways. First, Christians must not squander our freedom in Christ, which is freedom from under the law, by serving only ourselves. That leads to a laundry list of sinful lifestyles. Instead, Paul has written, those in Christ should allow God's Spirits to lead them into powerful service to others motivated by love.

Now Paul begins to offer a new list. This describes what those in Christ should expect to see flowing from their lives when they let the Holy Spirit lead them. Paul calls this the "fruit of the Spirit." It's helpful to understand this is meant to imply a single fruit---the Greek term is singular. This is not a list of separate fruits, but characteristics of the (single) fruit of the Spirit. In Christ, we should expect to see all of these characteristics showing up together as we give God's Spirit control. They come in no particular order, or rank, or schedule.

First is peace. Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. Throughout history leaders have used peacemaking and diplomacy to establish a certain type of behavioral restraint that has resulted in the establishment of regional peace or economic growth through various forms of agreements or peace treaties.

Such behavioral restraint has often resulted in the reduction of conflicts, greater economic interactivity, and consequently substantial prosperity.

“Psychological peace” (such as a peaceful thinking and emotions) is perhaps less well defined yet often a necessary precursor to establishing "behavioral peace."

Peaceful behavior sometimes results from a "peaceful inner disposition." Some have expressed the belief that peace can be initiated with a certain quality of inner tranquility that does not depend upon the uncertainties of daily life for its existence.<sup>[1]</sup> The acquisition of such a "peaceful internal disposition" for oneself and others can contribute to resolving of otherwise seemingly irreconcilable competing interests.

Second, is patience and is the ability, in the Spirit, to wait on God’s perfect timing even when our personal agenda seems to be failing. Translated from the Greek word *makrothymia*, “patience” includes controlling our response to circumstances. This contrasts with the error Paul gave in other places, translated as “fits of anger.” Scripture uses the term “patience” to mean an ability to endure hardship—to “weather the storm.”

Patience is the key to all good relationships. As parents, we need patience with our children. At work or school, we need patience with those around us. Patience is a successful component of any friendship.

Third is gentleness. Growing up, we are taught to approach many situations with gentleness - from holding a sweet newborn to handling a delicate vase. We are also taught to be gentle with others' feelings – like speaking the truth in love when it is difficult. The ability to act gently in various situations is something that Jesus modeled during His time on Earth. Jesus continues to be an example that we can always look to.

So what *is* gentleness? Gentleness is produced when a softened heart abides in Jesus. It's being intentional and, most importantly, **humble** - always being compassionate toward the struggles and shortcomings of others.

Jesus connects gentleness to humility in Matthew 11:29, saying: “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.” True gentleness breeds from humility. Feelings of superiority and pride are catalysts for harsh reactions. In 2 Corinthians 10:1, Paul also ties gentleness to humility in a description of himself: “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.” Many people think that “meekness” means weakness. In reality, “meekness” means having “strength under control.”

When a horse is described as being meek, it simply means that it is so in tune with its master, that even the smallest nudge right or left, will cause the horse to follow his master's lead. When we abide in Jesus, we ought to be so in tune with His spirit, that we can discern when and how to practice the fruits of the spirit.

By using the word "meek" in conjunction with gentleness, Paul highlights the type of meek attitude we must possess when interacting with others. Being gentle flows naturally when we authentically care about those around us, and when we value others' well-beings as much as our own.

Very often, gentleness is confused for weakness. When we react calmly in a situation that "should" make us mad, we can be perceived as fragile or uncertain. However, maintaining a gentle attitude when it's difficult is actually a strength, not a weakness. Although God possesses all of the power in the universe, he deals gently with His children. If we are to be like Him, we must act with gentleness, too.

Exhibiting gentleness in a harsh world is a valuable tool for us to use to further God's kingdom. As we live each day with "I'm Third" in mind, we must remember that putting God and others before ourselves requires humility, a precursor for gentleness. How can you show gentleness to those around you this week and spread God's love to someone who needs it?

So peace brings patience and gentleness which positively effects the lives of others. The fruits of the Spirit are practical gifts to live the Gospel and share the love of God with others.

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