

Galatians 5:22 Gentleness

Kingsgrove 9:30 am

13 September 2026

For the screen

Slide for Display heading (vary fonts etc)

1ST line

Gentleness

2nd line

Fruit of the Spirit

3rd line

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness faithfulness gentleness self control*

Being different...

Being distinct...

Being recognisably something beyond the usual.

It is something we, as Christians, are expected to achieve.

(1 Peter 1:15,16 on screen)

Last Sunday time, I referred to 1 Peter 1:15,16.

These verses set out this requirement our God makes of us.

Peter says...

“But just as he who called you is holy...

“Be holy in all that you do...

And then to underline his point, Peter then says...

“Be holy, because I am holy”.

The word “holy”...

It has built into it that idea of being set aside...

It has built into it that idea of being put into another category.

It has built into it that idea of being... distinct...of being different.

Now why is this command there for us in 1 Peter...?

“Be holy, because I am holy”.

And keep in mind it has its roots back in the Old Testament law.

Nothing new about it.

The word “holy” certainly contains the notion that this distinctiveness will be becoming something attractive...

That it will becoming something useful.

It may risk at times a negative reaction.

People have all kinds of reasons for spurning those who do good.

But we must ask why are the followers of our Lord so commanded...?

“Be holy”.

Well a short answer...

Because God says so.

He is after all, God.

But even to scan the opening verses of 1 Peter chapter 1.

We get a few reminders of why being “holy” is a worthy goal.

Our God has given us new birth into a living hope...

We, as Christians know where we are headed.

We have a “living hope”... that’s verse 3.

Jump to verse 8.

Another reminder... “we love him”.

Why not please, then, the one we love?

Or verse 9.

We are already anticipating “the salvation of our souls”.

Go to verse 14.

We are urged... we are commanded...

“Do not conform to the evil desires you once lived in”

Whatever it was in your life... maybe it still is... that did not please your Lord...

Before you came to him.

Get rid of it.

Do not conform to it.

Whatever it is you once lived in.

In summary...

We want to be holy because of the place that our generous Lord and God has in our lives.

So all of that leads to a couple of other questions to be answered.

Yes, we are convinced that now we must be different.

We must be “holy”.

And you may have had that goal now for a lot of years.

But two more questions now crop up.

How can I actually achieve the goal of being someone called “holy”?

(Because as hard as I try, I find myself failing).

And, even more particularly, what is it that my Lord and God calls holy?

Well, let me say, we have an advantage in sorting this out.

We have our bible.

In our very midst, we have the God who speaks to his people...

He is ever speaking to us in his Word.

Today, I promised us more on the “Fruit of the Spirit”.

(Galatians 5:22,23 on screen)

Galatians 5:22,23.

“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control”.

The “fruit of the Spirit”.

Go on to verse 25.

In our striving to be “holy”...

Which, incidentally, the status of being holy is something we’ve already been granted....

In our striving to be “holy”...

(Galatians 5:25 on screen)

We are to “live by the Spirit”.

We are to “keep in step with the Spirit”.

In other words...

Those 2 questions...

How do I manage to be “holy”?

How do we know what precisely God is asking of us?

As those who have our trust in the Lord Jesus...

We have the Holy Spirit in us.

Another advantage.

Yes, we have the Word of God.

And, yes, as well, we have the Holy Spirit.

That list of nine traits of character...

They define the fruit that envelopes us when the Holy Spirit comes to live in us.

So who is the Holy Spirit?

Briefly...

Jesus gives us 2 or 3 chapters on it before he goes off to the cross... in John’s gospel.

(John 15:26 on screen)

John 15:26.

Jesus is preparing his disciples prior to his departure.

Jesus talks about this one, he will send to us.

He explains he comes from the Father.

Jesus calls him the Spirit of truth.

And Jesus tells us that this one who is to come...

He will testify to us about Jesus.

We've come to call him "the Holy Spirit".

Our various bible translations struggle to get the right English word for him... from the Greek word we are given.

Here, probably "counsellor", but some others.

Keep remembering the Holy Spirit is a person.

He is not an "it".

So we take care on how we refer to "him".

In our creeds, our forefathers summarise these chapters in John's gospel.

And we will say, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

(Display sermon title slide)

It is, of course, in Acts chapter 2 that the believing church first receives the Holy Spirit.

What we call the day of Pentecost.

And just a short few weeks after Jesus has ascended into heaven.

We do believe the Holy Spirit is God.

And so, we speak of God the Father... God the Son... God the Holy Spirit.

There are only two places in the New Testament, where the three of them are spoken of in the same breath.

Do you know what they are...?

I'm sure you do.

At the end of Matthew, Jesus commissions the apostles to baptise...

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit".

At the end of 2 Corinthians, Paul gives us the prayer...

"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all".

And, needless to say...

We refer to them as the "Trinity".

The word "trinity" never occurs in the bible.

Down through the centuries, theologians have devised the word, “trinity” for us... to help us understand.

And now there is an endless list of all that it is that the Holy Spirit does... is doing.

But you can’t actually go to certain chapters of the New Testament and have it all systematically listed.

We have to pluck it out of here and there.

Bear in mind the Holy Spirit is there in the Old Testament.

But, there, he is not the common property of all the faithful.

It is only the prophets and some of the kings, and such other notables who have the Holy Spirit.

And, then, only for a certain time.

Certainly, the Holy Spirit is promised in the Old Testament.

We who believe by the New Testament, we have massive advantages over the Old Testament faithful.

We have Jesus... resurrected from the dead.

We each have the Holy Spirit... not just is he for those who bring the Word of God to us.

So, for instance...

John 15:26...

The Holy Spirit “testifies” about Jesus.

Back to 1 Peter 1...

The Holy Spirit “sanctifies” us.

He gets it into our heads that sin matters and needs to be confessed and turned away from.

In Matthew Jesus sends out the 12 disciples...

He tells them the Holy Spirit will speak through them.

In Romans...

There is a kind of evolution taking place in us who believe.

The old sinful nature (sometimes called the “flesh”) ...

It is being supplanted by the Holy Spirit.

As Paul says, we are now controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Holy Spirit.

In other places the Scriptures talk about the Holy Spirit giving us our relationship with the Father.

Christians know God... we are in a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

We know we have this relationship.

It is the Holy Spirit who makes this relationship possible.

Ephesians 2:18... we have access by the Spirit to the Father.

Galatians 4:6 retains that word, “Abba”... an intimate name for God.

The Father sends the Spirit into our hearts.

And the Spirit causes us to cry out “abba” Father.

But...

There are warnings...

In Acts 5 a couple known as Ananias and Sapphira suffered the penalty of death when they lied against the Spirit.

Jesus, in Matthew 12...

Verses 30,31.

Curiously he tells us, all sin can be forgiven, except for one.

“Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”.

If there was ever any doubt as to the status of the Holy Spirit in the 3 persons of God...

That warning, at least, should convince us.

And just why we have that exception to the promise of forgiveness has been debated long and hard for 2,000 years.

One final comment...

Everyone who has put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus has the Holy Spirit within him or her.

Romans 8:14... “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”.

Or the other way round 5 verses earlier...

“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ...

“He does not belong to Christ”.

We believe and we have the Holy Spirit.

We turn to Christ and from that moment the Holy Spirit lives in us.

He does not arrive in various quantities at different times.

Though Ephesians 4:30 warns us...

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”.

In Thessalonians, he warns us not to “quench” the Spirit.

If the Spirit’s presence is not so obvious...

There is a hint there as to whose actions might be responsible.

(Go back to Sermon title slide)

Well, back to Galatians 5:22.

One of the nine fruits of the Spirit is “gentleness”.

Other translations of the bible indicated that the Word could be meekness or humility or tolerance.

The best we can do to try and work out just what is “gentleness” is to see where the same Greek word is being used.

And, I guess we all know what gentleness is.

We all know what it is to be gentle.

Most of us have learned to appreciate there are times when we just want people to be gentle with us.

The book of Galatians is addressing a particular problem in the church in Galatia.

Galatia is very much in the centre of what we now call Turkey.

Close to the modern capital of Turkey... Ankara...

Troublemakers had infiltrated the founding church in Galatia.

They had arrived from Jerusalem.

And they had demanded the converts to Christianity to first embrace the Jewish traditions.

Paul has denounced them in no uncertain terms.

Possibly Paul is counselling the new believers in Galatia to draw on the fruit of the Spirit.

And so in confronting the troublemakers...

In denouncing these false teachers, they are to treat them with "gentleness".

In "gentleness", we have a fruit of the Holy Spirit to be directed to our fellow man.

It's an action, as much as it is an acquired character trait.

(1 Corinthians 4:21 on screen)

You get the same idea when Paul writes to the Corinthians.

Paul is not pleased with their behaviour on a number of fronts.

He fears he may have to come to them with a whip.

Whereas, he longs to visit in a spirit of love showing a gentle spirit. (4:21).

(2 Corinthians 10:21 on screen)

And... as Paul deals with the Corinthian church...

It appears that the right approach for confronting troublemakers...

It comes from Jesus himself...

And so, he appeals to them, by the "meekness and gentleness of Christ". 10:1.

Some of the hints at where gentleness fits in with our personal acquiring of the fruit of the Spirit.

Observe what else it is listed with.

(Colossians 3:12 on screen)

For instance, Colossians 3:12...

Five qualities to clothe ourselves with...

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.

On the day of judgement we will come to be judged clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

So that if gentleness is something we are to be clothed with now... in the time of waiting.

Well, gentleness is in good company.

It is to be recognised as being a part of the character of our Saviour.

(1 Timothy 6:11 on screen)

Another list in 1 Timothy 6:11.

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Going back to the Old Testament.

King David, late in his reign had to put down a grasp at power from one of his sons.

Absalom sensed the moment had come to seize power.

And as David's generals gained the upper hand against him...

David urged that they should be "gentle" with the young man Absalom.

Again, another instance of where gentleness is significant...

As we assert what is true in the face of opposition.

The same advice comes in the book of Proverbs.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath".

("but a harsh word stirs up anger").

The fruit of the Spirit... how appropriate in those moments when gentleness could be our last thought when we are dealing with an angry person.

And for those of us whose history goes back to the careful use of our prayer book Communion services...

(Matthew 11:29 on screen)

What does Jesus say to us in Matthew 11:29...

"Take my yoke upon me".

"And learn from me".

"For I am "gentle" and humble in heart".

It is Jesus who enters Jerusalem on the day we call Palm Sunday.

"Gentle and riding on a donkey".

To learn to be gentle...

It is all a part of being a Christlike person.

Certainly, Jesus knew that day...

As the crowds hailed him as he entered Jerusalem...

That those shouts of acclamation...

They were soon to turn against him in fierce opposition.

Yes, certainly "gentleness" appears to be above all required when we must confront opposition of some kind.

Maybe it's just an argument within the family.

And it's one of those times, when I'm humbly confident that I am the wise one...

And the one I'm addressing is the one being very unwise... is being very much the person in error.

We may not in the end even win the argument.

But the Holy Spirit is there for the Christian to confront the situation with a gentle Spirit.

(1 Peter 3:15 on screen)
Let me end with 1 Peter 3:15.

Where the apostle Peter is talking about a situation that may arise where our walk with the Lord has been noticed.

At some level or another, I have been granted the opportunity to explain myself.

Who knows what kind of powerful arguments I might have in my repertoire to bring to the defence of my trust in Jesus?

But whatever it is I might be equipped to say...

And, often, people do not so much want to be convinced with a powerfully reasoned argument...

Rather...

They want to meet someone full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Someone who has discovered that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ... that he/she is called to be holy

Someone who comes in a spirit of authenticity.

Someone... who as 1 Peter 3:15 puts it.

Someone who can answer them in "gentleness" and with respect.

Yes, to be called upon to defend our trust in Jesus is often an adversarial situation.

We know we should win.

But... we may well find that on that day, at least, we are not going to.

But... let's be careful to employ gentleness.

To display the fruit of the Spirit...

The tenacity of a vigorous antagonistic may be turned away with a gentle answer.

In Christ,, we are now a holy people.

We now live by the Spirit.

We feed on the Word of God.

And the fruit, now, of the Holy Spirit courses through ourselves.

That includes gentleness.

All of this is a part of our Christian ammunition.

We persist in being the "Holy" people of our Lord.

All of that with the purpose of seeing others find the joy of entering his kingdom.