

GENTLENESS

And Your gentleness makes me great.	Ps 18:35	6038
or with love and a spirit of gentleness ?	1Co 4:21	4240
by the meekness and gentleness of Christ	2Co 10:1	1932
gentleness , self-control; against such things	Ga 5:23	4240
such a one in a spirit of gentleness ;	Ga 6:1	4240
with all humility and gentleness ,	Eph 4:2	4240
humility, gentleness and patience;	Col 3:12	4240
faith, love, perseverance <i>and</i> gentleness .	1Tm 6:11	4239a
with gentleness correcting those who are in	2Tm 2:25	4240
his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.	Jas 3:13	4240
in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;	1Pe 3:15	4240

177 Gentleness

- **A Gentle words**

A soft answer turns away wrath (Prov. 15:1); will Leviathan speak soft words? (Job 41:3); a soft tongue may break bones (Prov. 25:15); Shechem spoke tenderly to Dinah (Gen. 34:3); I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly (Hos. 2:14); they brought the apostles out without force because they feared the people (Acts 5:26); be submissive, not only to masters who are good and gentle (1 Pet. 2:18).

- **B Gentleness of God**

The wisdom from above is gentle (Jas. 3:17); your gentleness has made me great (2 Sam. 22:36; Ps. 18:35).

- **C Gentleness of Christ**

I am gentle and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29); your king comes, gentle and on a donkey (Matt. 21:5); a bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not quench (Isa. 42:3; Matt. 12:20); I exhort you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor. 10:1).

- **D Gentleness of God's people**

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness (Gal. 5:23); we were gentle as a nursing mother among you (1 Thess. 2:7); a high priest can deal gently with the ignorant (Heb. 5:2); the Lord's slave must in gentleness correct those who oppose him (2 Tim. 2:25); restore the sinner in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1); make your defence with gentleness (1 Pet. 3:15); put on gentleness (Col. 3:12); pursue gentleness (1 Tim. 6:11); a bishop [overseer] must not be violent but gentle (1 Tim. 3:3); remind them to be gentle (Titus 3:2); a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4); let your gentleness be known to all (Phil. 4:5); blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5); walk in humility and gentleness with patience (Eph. 4:2); let him show by his good conduct his deeds in the meekness of wisdom (Jas. 3:13).

88.59 *πραΰτης, ητος, f; πραΰπαθία, ας, f:* gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one's dealings with others—'gentleness, meekness, mildness.'

πραΰτης: μετ• πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης κα• πραΰτητος 'be always humble and meek'
Eph 4:2.

πραῦπαθία: δῖωκε ... •πομονήν, πραῦπαθίαν ‘strive for ... endurance and gentleness’
1 Tm 6:11.

In a number of languages ‘gentleness’ is often expressed as a negation of harshness, so that ‘gentleness’ may often be rendered as ‘not being harsh with people,’ but gentleness may also be expressed in some instances in an idiomatic manner, for example, ‘always speaking softly to’ or ‘not raising one’s voice.’

†**טאַ** S³²⁸ TWOT^{72b} GK³⁵¹ **subst. gentleness**, used only adverbially:—**a.** as adverb. accus. 1 K 21:27: **טאַ וַיְהִי לְאָהָב** and he (Ahab) went about *softly* (sc. in penitence); **b.** with לְ of norm or state (as in **לְבַטַח**, v. לְ) 2 S 18:5 **לְאִט־לִי לְנַעַר** (deal) *gently* for me with the young man, Is 8:6 the waters of Shiloah **לְאִט־לְכֵימָם** that go *gently*; with pretonic qames Jb 15:11: **לְאִט־עִמָּךְ דְּבַר** a word (spoken) *gently* with thee; with sf. Gn 33:14 **אֶתְנַהַלָּה לְאִטִּי** I will lead on *gently* (lit. *according to my gentleness*). S. p. 532 for **טאַ** *secretly*.

B Gentleness of God

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● **C Gentleness of Christ**

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An expression of compassion, seen in God's dealings with the frail and weak, and expected of believers in their dealings with others.

The gentleness of God

In dealing with the wayward Isa 40:1-2; Lk 1:76-79 *See also* Isa 30:18-19; 54:8; 63:15 *God's gentleness is not always evident*; Hos 2:13-15; Ro 2:4 *God's gentle dealings are not always appreciated.*

In caring for the weak Isa 40:11 *See also* 1Ki 19:12

The gentleness of Jesus Christ

Mt 11:29 *See also* Zec 9:9; Mt 21:4-5; 12:18-21; Isa 42:1-3; 2Co 10:1; Php 2:1; Heb 5:2

Examples of Jesus Christ's gentleness

Mk 1:40-42; 5:25-34; 10:13-16; Jn 8:3-11

Gentleness as strength esteemed by God

Pr 15:1; Jas 3:17 *See also* Pr 25:15; Mt 5:5; 1Pe 3:1-4

Gentleness as a mark of Christian character

Col 3:12 *See also* Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:1-2; 1Ti 6:11

Believers are to reflect God's gentleness in their dealings with people

In correcting the wayward Gal 6:1 *See also* 2Ti 2:24-25

In reasoning with unbelievers 1Pe 3:15-16

In nurturing new believers *See also* 1Th 2:7

In showing consideration to all Tit 3:1-2 *See also* Eph 4:32; Php 4:5

See also

1030 God, compassion

2015 Christ, compassion

3254 Holy Spirit, fruit of

5765 attitudes to people

5806 compassion

6686 mercy

8255 fruit, spiritual

8276 humility

8291 kindness

8305 meekness

8306 mercifulness

8318 patience

Galatians 6:1

c. How it should be done

You who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. The same Greek word for ‘gentleness’ (*praotēs*) has occurred in 5:23 as part of the fruit of the Spirit, for ‘gentleness’, writes Bishop Lightfoot, ‘is a characteristic of true spirituality’. One of the reasons why only spiritual Christians should attempt the ministry of restoration is that only the spiritual are gentle. Paul then adds that we are ourselves to be watchful, lest we also are tempted. This suggests that gentleness is born of a sense of our own weakness and proneness to sin. J. B. Phillips paraphrases: ‘Not with any feeling of superiority but being yourselves on guard against temptation.’

We have seen, then, that when a Christian brother is overtaken in sin, he is to be restored, and that mature, spiritual believers are to exercise this delicate ministry gently and humbly. It is sad that in the contemporary church this plain command of the apostle is more honoured in the breach than the observance. Yet if we walked by the Spirit we would love one another more, and if we loved one another more we would bear one another’s burdens, and if we bore one another’s burdens we would not shrink from seeking to restore a brother who has fallen into sin. Further, if we obeyed this apostolic instruction as we should, much unkind gossip would be avoided, more serious backsliding prevented, the good of the church advanced, and the name of Christ glorified.

Conclusion

We come back to where we started. Those who walk by the Spirit are led into harmonious relationships with one another. Indeed, this reciprocal ‘one another’ is the word which gives cohesion to the paragraph we have been studying. There is to be ‘no provoking of one another’ and ‘no envy of one another’ (5:26), but rather are we to ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (6:2). And this active Christian ‘one-anotherness’ is an inevitable expression of Christian brotherhood. It is not an accident that Paul addresses his readers as ‘brethren’ (verse 1). In the Greek the first word and the last word of Galatians 6, apart from the final ‘Amen’, is the word ‘brethren’. Bishop Lightfoot quotes the old Latin commentator Bengel: ‘a whole argument lies hidden under this one word.’

Just as the apostle argues about our Christian liberty from the fact that we are God’s ‘sons’, so he argues for responsible Christian conduct from the fact that we are ‘brothers’. This paragraph is the New Testament answer to Cain’s irresponsible question ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ (Gn. 4:9). If a man is my brother, then I am his keeper. I am to care for him in love, to be concerned for his welfare. I am neither to assert my fancied superiority over him and ‘provoke him’, nor resent his superiority over me and ‘envy’ him. I am to love him and to serve him. If he is heavy-laden, I am to bear his burdens. If he falls into sin, I am to restore him, and that gently. It is to such practical Christian living, brotherly care and service that walking by the Spirit will lead us, and it is by such too that the law of Christ is fulfilled.

πραῦπαθία (*praupathia*), *gentleness*. A compound of πάσχω and πραῦς. Cognate words: κακοπάθεια, κακοπαθέω, •μοιοπαθής, πάθημα, παθητός, πάθος, πάσχω, πραῦς, πραῦτης, προπάσχω, συγκακοπαθέω, συμπαθέω, συμπαθής, συμπάσχω

88.59 (1) *gentleness* 1 Ti 6:11

2 Corinthians 10:1

10:1 After pleading for the Corinthians to renew their zeal for the collection for the saints of Jerusalem, Paul takes up again his own cause and the issue of his supposed lack of boldness when he is at close quarters with the Corinthians. He makes clear that he is not spoiling for a fight. He does not want to have to be hard on them when he next returns to Corinth, but he does want to remove all doubts about his supposed shortage of courage in face-to-face confrontations. He is fully prepared to confront them in person. Paul launches this appeal to cut off any possible support for the meddling false apostles so that his upcoming visit will not be another painful one. His entreaty in vv. 1–2 introduces two key ideas that he will address: (1) the mistaken opinion of some that he wavers between boldness in his letters and timidity in person, and (2) his own conviction that his style of ministry is modeled after Christ.

Paul begins this section authoritatively with an emphatic, “Now I Paul myself” (*autos egō Paulos*). This is the language of presence which teasingly brings up the complaint that some have against him: “I who am timid [humble] when face to face with you but bold when I am away—I beg of you that when I am present.” This statement is not Paul’s own evaluation of his deportment. Rather it picks up the criticism of someone in Corinth who “says” this (10:10). He intends to debunk any illusion that some might have that he is only bold when he fires off hot letters from a safe distance to be delivered by his associates. He stresses that he is present to them through this letter. Nevertheless, he is acutely aware of the difference between being present in person and being present through written correspondence and therefore underscores that the acknowledged forcefulness of his letters is not some false front. A continuity exists between the apostle who writes these letters and the apostle who will soon come to them in person.

Peterson contends, “The emphatic self-reference in our passage, then, is intended to introduce the weight of Paul’s apostolic authority, remind the Corinthians just who is addressing them, and, Paul hopes, get them to listen.” Paul may be dissociating what he says in these chapters from his coauthor Timothy, who is named in the salutation (1:1). But after talking about the visit of Titus and the brothers to Corinth (8:6, 16–19, 22, 24; 9:3–5), it is more likely that he now addresses the prospect of his own visit to Corinth (10:2) and he uses this expression to distinguish it from that of the brothers. He is defending *his* authority, explaining the theological significance of *his* weakness, and warning of *his* power and willingness to discipline the disobedient vigorously when *he* comes.

Paul again does not seek to lord it over them; he exercises his authority first by beseeching them (see 2:8; 5:20; 6:1). He still brandishes only the power of persuasion based on the truth in Christ, and he trusts that the Corinthians will make the correct

¹ Logos Bible Software. (2011; 2011). *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Logos Bible Software.

judgment from what he has written. If any in Corinth might be misled into thinking that Paul is not as strong as the more imperious interlopers, he wants to set them straight. He packs high-powered, divine weapons, but “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” always govern their use. Paul therefore begins his appeal by highlighting the virtues of Christ, whom he represents as his ambassador and after whom he patterns his ministry (4:10; 13:3–4). He appeals to the extraordinary power that Jesus employed with an even more extraordinary meekness and kindness.

Meekness (*praytēs*, “moderation,” mildness”) was used in classical literature for “a calm and soothing disposition” that contrasted with “rage and savagery.” “It implies moderation ... which permits reconciliation.” It was a virtue hailed in leaders who should be slow to anger, willing to accommodate, and capable of showing pity. In keeping with this usage, Josephus uses it to refer to rulers who were courteous or of a gentle disposition, benevolent to all. Ancient writers esteemed this virtue because it “ ‘mellows’ all relations ... between citizens ... even while it remains implacable toward enemies.” It was viewed as a key virtue in those who had power over others. It kept them from the excesses of severity and tyranny and encouraged leniency, thus helping them to win over their adversaries.³⁴ The “mild look” and “soft voice” of the one who is meek presupposes a self-mastery that controls any intemperate feelings from boiling over. This virtue was particularly crucial for a teacher who must be patient and not irascible with the errors of his pupils and the challenges from any detractors.

The Greek Old Testament adds a distinct nuance to the word in applying it to those who are submissive to the divine will (Ps 132:11). In the New Testament, Jesus presents himself as “gentle [meek] and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29) to explain why his “yoke” is easy for those who are weary, burdened, harassed, and helpless (Matt 9:36). Jesus’ yoke is easy because he “treats his disciples as yokefellowes rather than as camels and donkeys to be loaded down (23:4).”

Paul has mentioned his meekness before in his dealings with the Corinthians. He told them that they may have ten thousand guardians in Christ but not many fathers (4:15). The guardian (*paidagōgos*) was a slave child-minder who, in Greek plays, became a comic type caricatured as harsh and stupid and recognizable by his rod. Paul asks the Corinthians if they wanted him to come with a rod (NIV “whip”) as a *paidagōgos* to administer harsh discipline or to come with love and a spirit of meekness as a father (1 Cor 4:21). He makes it clear that he would much rather come as a gentle and serene father (1 Cor 4:15). His lengthy correspondence with them reveals that he prefers trying to persuade rather than to rail against them and to coax them into submission with reasoned arguments rather than to beat them into submission. This earlier passage reveals Paul’s basic stance toward discipline: he always wants to be in a position in which he can be mild toward those he regards as his children. He knows that punishment, harsh or otherwise, can inflict shame and inflame bitterness and has the potential to drive the offender from the faith (2:5–11; see also Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). As their spiritual father, Paul expects obedience from his churches, but he believes that a father’s discipline should be tempered by love, compassion, kindness, and patience (Col 3:12) and that Christ’s apostle, in particular, should emulate the model of Christ’s meekness and gentleness.

The noun “gentleness” (*epieikeia*, “kindness,” “reasonableness,” “fairness,” “clemency,” “moderation”) reinforces the idea of indulgence. It was regarded as an essential quality in judges since justice must go hand-in-hand with mercy. Spicq writes,

“For those in positions of superiority, *epieikeia* is an easy-going quality that moderates the inflexible severity of wrath, a fairness that corrects anything that might be odious or unjust in the strict application of the law.” Josephus records an Essene elder predicting when Herod was still a child that he would become “King of the Jews” and admonishing him “to love justice and piety toward God and mildness toward your citizens.”⁴² The noun, adjective, and adverb are applied to God in the LXX to describe God’s mildness and forbearance.⁴³ “Gentleness” appears as an essential quality in a church leader (1 Tim 3:3). The bishop is not to be prone to violence or vindictiveness but should be moderate, gentle, and serene. According to James, those who have the wisdom from above show gentleness as well as being pure, peaceable, willing to yield, and full of mercy (Jas 3:17).

Appealing to Christ’s virtues of meekness and gentleness does two things. First, it shows that Paul takes for granted his status of authority over them as their spiritual director since these are the virtues “of those who voluntarily do not make full use of the power that their superior position justly allows.” Christ who reigns over Christians as their Lord and judge is known by them as meek and gentle. Rejecting an arrogant and domineering attitude over his charges does not mean that Paul lacks authority, as some infer, but instead it means that Paul is like Christ. His gentle demeanor and lack of aggressiveness in person are not to be taken as signs that he lacks confidence or fortitude but as evidence of his conformity to Christ’s example. Second, the reference to these virtues shows his basic goodwill toward them. He is open and conciliatory and hopes that his moderation and leniency will make a more drastic show of his authority quite unnecessary. But if this approach fails, he promises not to be lenient again when he comes (13:2).

The opponents concede that Paul could be bold and severe in his letters, and he tries to help them understand that his goal was to make it unnecessary for him to take disciplinary action when he arrived. He will warn them that they should not mistake his lowly demeanor for cowardice or impotency. Instead, it conforms to the paradigm of the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Although gentleness and meekness were primarily viewed in secular literature as virtues for those in power, “humility” (*tapeinos*, NIV “timid”) was not. It was not highly regarded in the ancient world and did not have the positive, moral sense of being modest and void of wrongful pride. Paul uses the word “humble” in 7:6 in the sense of one who is “lowly” and “downcast.” When his opponents describe Paul as being “humble,” they understand it to be a reproach. Humility was an attitude suitable to one who was “base, ignoble or despised,” not the attitude of any self-respecting person. Lucian wrote: “The humble-witted [are] ... neither sought by their friends nor feared by their enemies ... [but are] ever cringing to the man above.”⁴⁸ Here was the problem. The Corinthians have mistaken Paul’s gentleness for timidity, something they regarded as more fitting for one who was servile, demeaned, and abased than an apostle of the exalted Christ. Dio Chrysostom comments: “Certainly foolish persons universally scorn men of no reputation and pay no heed to them, even though they may chance to be giving most excellent advice; but, on the other hand, when they see men being honoured by the multitude or by persons of greatest power, they do not disdain to be guided by them.”⁵⁰

Paul has admitted that the world viewed him as one who was dishonored and of no reputation (6:8). The world’s scorn of Christ’s apostle has unfortunately permeated this church, imbued as it is with the world’s values.

Some person or persons in Corinth therefore must have belittled Paul as too lowly to suit their ideal of towering apostolic leadership. He will derisively ask them in 11:20–21 if they would prefer him to be more ruthless. The Corinthian culture embraced “those who projected themselves with vigor and force.” They gladly put up with Paul’s haughty rivals who enslave them, prey upon them, take advantage of them, lord it over them, and strike them in the face (11:20). Some apparently found this manner of wielding authority—speaking loudly and whacking with a big stick—far more impressive than Paul’s more humble and timorous approach. His response drips with sarcasm, “To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!” (11:21). But his point in these chapters is that he only appears to be weak and that he is really powerful in Christ who works in his weakness. They have misread his weakness and have failed to see how God’s power uses and overcomes weakness. He will therefore turn the tables on them by arguing, “If he were not weak, the power of God could not become perfect in him.” His weakness then becomes something in which he can boast (11:30; 12:9–10).

Paul’s opening sentence in this section, “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you,” is incomplete. What follows in 10:2–6 clarifies the nature of his appeal. He can be as bold and able to destroy arguments in person as he can in letters. Those who oppose him or treat his admonitions lightly are therefore forewarned. He is ready to wage war but pleads that he not have to do so. The meekness of Christ that they have witnessed in him does not compel him to continue to turn the other cheek when challenged by those in the congregation who are headstrong and flout his authority or to sit idly by as overbold interlopers, ministers of Satan, engage in a hostile takeover to wrest this church from his orbit of influence. Like Christ, who boldly confronted Pharisees and chief priests when they challenged his authority in the temple, Paul is prepared to come to Corinth with guns blazing. But he first begs the Corinthians not to force a showdown. He does not seek vengeance against the trespassers who have infringed on his ministry, but he will defend himself. His defense is for the good of the community in danger of being seduced by a different gospel and another Jesus (11:4) as much as it is to salvage his slandered reputation (Rom 12:19).

10:2 Whether Paul will be meek and gentle when he next visits them depends on how they respond to this letter. He prefers meekness but will show his boldness if necessary. He now begs them to obey, but his entreaty contains a thinly veiled threat that sets the stage for this anticipated visit. They need to prepare themselves for his arrival by completing their collection so that they will not be embarrassed before the Macedonians who will come with him. More importantly, they need to prepare themselves with a thorough moral reformation so that Paul can spare the rod when he comes; and then both of them can be spared another painful visit.

In these opening verses Paul alludes to charges that have been raised by those who wish to impugn his reputation and undermine his influence. First, the reference to the discrepancy between his mighty letters and his weak presence points back to the painful visit alluded to in 2:1 when he was publicly humiliated in a nasty confrontation and quietly withdrew rather than stay to battle it out. He responded with the severe letter and did not return as expected. His threat in an earlier letter to discipline them (1 Cor 4:18–21) and his apparent failure to follow through, coupled with his abrupt departure after the quarrel, may have given credence to the suspicion that he was not a spiritually authoritative apostle but a man of the flesh who was cowardly and ineffectual. He was, as

it were, only a “paper” apostle. By contrast, the intruders appeared to embody the very apostolic ideals that Paul’s detractors claimed he lacked. They displayed a more commanding spiritual presence, spoke with greater eloquence, and flashed more conspicuous evidence of divine authority (11:20). To use an image from a popular film, some in Corinth had been inclined to regard Paul as if he were like the Wizard of Oz when he was finally exposed as a fraud. The wizard frightened people when he hid behind his curtain pulling levers and projecting a menacing image on a large screen with noisy sound effects. But he turned out to be bumbling and timorous when met face-to-face without his elaborate props to shield him. To their mind, Paul cuts a sorry figure when he is present with them and only dares to browbeat them in letters when he is safely out of reach (10:1, 10).

A second accusation may be related to the first, that Paul “walks according to the flesh” (NIV “we live by the standards of this world”). This phrase is open to a variety of interpretations. It may refer to their opinion that he acts from worldly motives and may be tied to accusations that he is inconsistent and unreliable (see 1:12, 17). He says one thing and does another as his fancy strikes him.

A third problem relates to his unimposing physical presence and ineffective speech. His bodily presence (*parousia*) is weak (10:10); his speech is of no account (10:10; 11:6). He is less than awe-inspiring. Paul’s oratory leaves much to be desired according to the rhetorical standards they prize. His physical appearance and perhaps his mannerisms and speech make him ineffective and seemingly incompetent. He does not project success as the world would recognize it.

We can only guess at the other possible charges by reading between the lines. Does someone accuse him of not belonging to Christ in some way (10:7)? Is this related to their general opinion of his rhetorical clumsiness that is then presumed to reflect some spiritual inadequacy? Do they think that he somehow lacks charismatic power appropriate for an apostle (12:12; 13:3–4)? Certainly, they are less than pleased with his continuing to work at a trade. They regard such work as serving only to lower him (11:7–9; see 1 Cor 9:3–18). Do some accuse him of conniving avarice by refusing to accept overtly anything from them because he plans to skim money off the top from their collection (11:7–9; 12:14–18)? He probably also compared badly with the interlopers when it came to airing his divine visions and ecstatic experiences, and this vision deficit may have also served to lower their esteem of his spiritual prowess.

Paul’s purpose is not to get into a shouting match with his detractors but to recapture the goodwill of his listening audience so that they might make a favorable judgment about him themselves. He will do so by establishing his character as a genuine apostle, pushing emotional buttons, drawing on irony to show the foolishness of his opponents, and presenting sound arguments with which no reasonable judge could disagree.

Galatians 5:23

Prajñtēs does not have the negative sense of a lack of spirit, courage, vigor, and energy that its translation as “meekness” (AV, RV) or even as “gentleness” (RSV, NASB, NIV, NEB) might convey in modern English. In classical Greek *prajñtēs/prajñtēs* and the cognate adjective *prajñs/prajñs* were typically used to describe a person in whom strength and gentleness go together. In the Septuagint “gentleness” usually signifies a humble disposition which submits to the divine will.¹⁴⁰ In the NT “gentleness” is associated with

love (1 Cor. 4:21), forbearance (2 Cor. 10:1; Tit. 3:2), patience and humility (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12), and peaceableness, that is, the capacity for “avoiding quarrels” (RSV, Tit. 3:2). In 1 Cor. 4:21 “gentleness” is contrasted with “a rod,” which symbolizes chastisement.

“Gentleness” is the spirit in which the Word of God is to be received (Jas. 1:21), the erring brother restored (Gal. 6:1), and the opponents of the Lord’s servant corrected with sound doctrine (2 Tim. 2:25). It should, indeed, pervade the whole of Christian living (cf. Jas. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:4). It was an outstanding feature in the life of Jesus (Mt. 11:29; 21:5; 2 Cor. 10:1), who taught that “those of a gentle spirit ... shall have the earth for their possession” (Mt. 5:5). That “gentleness” does not render one incapable of indignation is demonstrated by Jesus (cf. Mt. 11:29 with Mk. 3:5) and by Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1 with Gal. 1:8f.; 5:12). As an ethical grace in the believer’s life, “gentleness” may be described as a humble and pliable submission to God’s will which reflects itself in humility, patience and forbearance towards others, regarding even insult or injury as God’s means of chastisement (cf. 2 Sam. 16:11) or training (cf. Num. 12:3). It thus implies, but is not identical with, self-control.

Enkrateia—“temperance” (AV, RV) or “self-control” (NEB, etc.)—figures among the objects of pursuit in the list of virtues in 1 Pet. 1:5–7 and formed an important topic, together with righteousness and the coming judgment, in Paul’s discussion with Felix (Acts 24:25). It is part of the strict discipline which every athlete, not least the spiritual athlete, goes into (1 Cor. 9:25) and is an indispensable qualification of the elder (Tit. 1:8, where the adjective, *enkratēs*, is used). The opposite of self-control is self-indulgence (Mt. 23:25, *akrasia*), the quality of being “without self-control” (2 Tim. 3:3, NASB, NIV; *akratēs*), the inability to keep one’s passions under control or to resist temptation. Paul teaches that unmarried persons and widows who lack self-control should marry (1 Cor. 7:9). A married couple should not deprive each other except by mutual consent and temporarily for the purpose of undistracted prayer, lest they be tempted by Satan because of their lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:5).

There is, however, no ascetic flavor to the self-control enjoined by Paul: he himself did not exercise self-control for its own sake; rather, in order that he might carry out his commission it was necessary for him to cast aside everything which might hinder him from reaching his goal (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25–27). Nor is self-control in the NT identical with the concept of self-control in Greek philosophical ethics, which “achieves its ethical significance from the humanistic understanding of life which has freedom as its goal”; behind that concept stands the ideal of the free and autonomous person who in self-mastery controls all things and in self-restraint maintains his freedom in face of evil passions and pleasures. The NT, on the other hand, refers to “self-control” as the mastery of the self and the fashioning of one’s life in the way which God desires.

It has been observed that “the word-group is more often used with a sexual connotation than otherwise; hence ‘chastity’ can usually be a suitable rendering.” It may be that in our passage too Paul has the sexual aspect primarily if not exclusively in view. Just as “goodness” may be regarded as an antithesis to “envy,” “self-control” may be taken as being in contrast with the sins of “fornication, impurity, and indecency” and “drinking bouts” and “orgies”—all of which either are sexual offenses or might involve uncontrolled sensual passions.¹⁴⁷

A few observations may be made on this list of ethical graces as a whole. (a) The nine items are more difficult to classify than the fifteen in the preceding list of vices. One may divide them into three groups of three, referring respectively to Christian habits of mind in their more general aspect, special qualities affecting a man's relations with his neighbor, and general principles of Christian conduct. But love in the first group and fidelity and gentleness in the third have much to do with interpersonal relationships, so this division is a trifle too neat, although it certainly makes for easy memorization. Perhaps the best we can do by way of classification is to recognize that the first three items are directly associated with the Holy Spirit in Romans (5:5; 14:17), while the remaining six have to do chiefly with personal relationships. Patience, kindness, and gentleness appear in 1 Cor. 13:4–7 as characteristics of love; perhaps Paul regarded love as the origin and motivating principle of the other virtues affecting personal relationships, even though we hesitate to go so far as to concur that “it includes all the other gifts within itself.”¹⁵¹ It is surely a significant indication of Paul's experience of the Spirit's work in his own life that four aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are mentioned in his description of his apostolic ministry in 2 Cor. 6:4–10: patience, kindness, love and joy (vv. 6, 10).

(b) H. Ridderbos¹⁵² points out regarding these nine graces and other virtues mentioned in, for example, Phil. 4:5, 8; Col. 3:12–15, that

even though they occur in the same terms in the non-Christian Greek ethic, in Paul's epistles [they] are always brought under the viewpoint of brotherly communion and the upbuilding of the church, and not, as in the Greek ethic, under that of character formation; they are always understood therefore as the fulfillment of the requirement of love and thus approached from the liberty and obedience in Christ.

(c) The fruit of the Spirit is not the same as the gifts of the Spirit. Only the term *pistis* is common to the list of graces here and that of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8–11, and its meaning is not the same in both cases (“fidelity” and “faith,” respectively). While both the graces of character and the gifts for ministry are alike products of the Holy Spirit, it is ethical graces more than spiritual gifts which represent Paul's distinctive understanding of the Spirit: the Spirit's most important work in the believer is to enable him to become holy. We cannot say that Paul ethicized the Spirit, as if the early Church had regarded the Spirit as a non-ethical, mysterious, miracle-working power, which Paul then reinterpreted as the Christian's moral dynamic; already the primitive Church's conception of the Spirit clearly had an ethical aspect to it (e.g., Acts 5:1–5). Nevertheless a comparison with his treatment of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12–14 suggests that Paul did distinguish the ethical aspect of the Spirit's activity from what may have been a less unambiguous understanding of the Spirit, and did shift the emphasis from the more outward spiritual gifts to the inner qualities which control conduct.

(d) While these virtues are presented as the product of the Spirit, it is worth emphasizing again (cf. on v. 18) that the believer is not without responsibility, “by attentive openness to God,” to allow the Spirit to produce these graces in him.

23b “Such things as these” (*tōn toioutōn*) shows that the list just given is, again (cf. “and the like” in v. 21), not exhaustive but representative. In Paul's statement, literally “against such there is no law” (AV, RV, RSV), “such” means “such things,” if it is taken as neuter as in NASB and NIV, or, less probably, “such people,” if it is taken as masculine.¹⁵⁶ The primary thought suggested by the statement is that while law exists for

the purpose of restraint (cf. 1 Tim. 1:9) there is nothing in the manifestations of the Spirit to restrain. This easily leads to the thought represented by the NEB rendering, that the manifestations of the Spirit belong to a sphere with which law has nothing to do. It is possible, however, to go further and, with E. D. Burton, to regard this as “an understatement of the apostle’s thought for rhetorical effect”: the mild assertion as it stands “has the effect of an emphatic assertion that these things fully meet the requirements of the law (cf. v. 14).” But as “these things” are “the fruit of the Spirit,” Paul’s words ultimately mean that “the law is not against those who walk by the Spirit because in principle they are fulfilling the law.”¹⁶⁰ This interpretation of v. 23b, which is in full accord with Paul’s teaching in Rom. 8:4, understands that although the word *nomos* is without the article and could be a general reference to any law, Paul is probably still thinking of the Mosaic law and his words are directed against the Jewish claim that the law is the divinely-given means of helping man’s inclination for good to overcome his inclination for evil. He is saying that submission to the Spirit’s leading is a superior way (cf. on v. 18).

5:23 πραΰτης, ‘gentleness’, is defined by Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 2.1108a) as the mean between excessive proneness to anger (•ργιλότης) and incapacity for anger (•οργησία). 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). Paul entreats the Corinthians ‘b the meekness (πραΰτης) and gentleness (•πιείκεια) 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.) ‘The meek (ο• ... πραε•ς) shall inherit the land’ (or ‘the earth’), according to Ps. 37 (LXX 36):11—a saying which is incorporated in one of the Matthaean beatitudes (Mt. 5:5)—the suggestion perhaps being that the hotheads will wipe one another out and leave the meek in possession. For an animal to be πραῦς is to be tame or tamed (the verb πραῦνω is used of taming wild animals), but as an ethical quality πραῦς implies self-control, the fruit of control by the Spirit of God. πραΰτης has much in common with μακροθυμία, with which it is conjoined in Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:12. Christians should show ‘all gentleness (π•σαν ... πραΰτητα, RSV ‘perfect courtesy’) to all men’ (Tit. 3:2).

•γκράτεια, ‘self-control’, has something in common with πραΰτης, but denotes control of more sensual passions than anger. According to Aristotle, who denotes the seventh book of his Nicomachean Ethics to a discussion of the difference between •γκράτεια and its opposite, •κρασία, the man who is •γκρτής has powerful passions, but keeps them under control: the •κρατής does not deliberately choose the wrong, but he has no strength to resist temptation (*Eth. Nic.* 7.1145bff.). As an ethical term, •γκράτεια was introduced by Socrates (*Xen. Mem.* 1.5.4). Plato sets it in opposition to over-indulgence in food and sex (*Rep.* 3.390B, C). Paul says that the athlete practises it (•γκρατεύεται) in all things, and applies the lesson to the spiritual athlete (1 Cor. 9:25). In 1 Cor. 7:9 he advises single or widowed persons who cannot exercise sexual restraint to marry (ε• δ• ο•κ• •γκρατεύονται, γαμησάτωσαν). The word-group is more often used

with a sexual connotation than otherwise; Hence ‘chastity’ can usually be a suitable rendering. In the second century AD we meet a Christian sect called the Encratites (their best-known member being Tatian, the compiler of the *Diatessaron*); they were so called because of their insistence on •γκράτεια which, however, they interpreted as asceticism, including abstention from flesh, wine and marriage (Iren. *Haer.* 1.28.1; Euseb. *HE* 4.28f.). How far this life-style departed from the NT standard of •γκράτεια may be seen from 1 Tim. 4:1–5.

The punctuation of Nestle-Aland²⁶ (but not of UBS3) divides these nine virtues into three groups of three, which would make for ready memorization. They are not the preconditions of justification; they follow it spontaneously. They are naturally found together, unlike the gifts of the Spirit, which are variously apportioned, one to this person and another to that person (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–11). Where love is present, the other virtues will not be far away; it is love that binds them all together in perfect harmony (cf. Col. 3:14).

If the works of the flesh as a whole be compared with the fruit of the Spirit as a whole, it will appear that the works of the flesh are disruptive of κοινωνία, whereas the fruit of the Spirit fosters it.

κατ• τ•ν τοιούτων ο•κ •στιν νόμος. Paul does not simply mean that the nine virtues which make up the fruit of the Spirit are not forbidden by law; he means that when these qualities are in view we are in a sphere with which law has nothing to do. Law may prescribe certain forms of conduct and prohibit others, but love, joy, peace and the rest cannot be legally enforced. ‘A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine’s own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God’s, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ’ (S. H. Hooke, ‘What is Christianity?’ in *The Siege Perilous* [London, 1956], 264).

In Aristotle (*Pol.* 3.13, 1284a) the statement κατ• δ• τ•ν τοιούτων ο•κ •στι νόμος is used of persons who surpass their fellows in virtue (•ρετή) like gods among men. They do not need to have their actions regulated by laws; on the contrary, they themselves constitute a law (a standard) for others (α•το• γάρ ε•σι νόμος). Paul probably does not quote directly or consciously from Aristotle: the saying may have passed into proverbial currency, like many phrases from Shakespeare or the AV which are frequently quoted without awareness of their source. Aristotle’s statement shows some (rather remote) affinity with what Paul says here; it has more in common with the observation in 1 Tim. 1:9 that ‘the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient’.