



**Summer Fruit-Part 8**  
**Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness**  
**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

This is week number eight, believe it or not, as we study through the Fruit of the Spirit, as it's called, the Fruit of the Spirit. Here are these nine attributes, these qualities, these virtues, these characteristics that are supposed to exemplify the Christian life and the Spirit of God wants to produce them in us. Now, there's a lot in your life that's fighting against it. But the Bible says these are things you need to have as a part of the evidence of your salvation, God's spirit, working these things out inside of your life so that people can see it in your words and your actions and your behaviors.

A lot of them we are glad to be known for. I mean, right? Think through the list, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. It would be good for someone to say you're a loving person. Right? You're a kind person, a peaceful person, a faithful person. We like all those descriptives. But number eight, as we get to the penultimate virtue in our study, I'm not sure many of us are saying I hope people see me as a gentle person, unless you are, I don't know, working on a children's television program. If you want to be Mr. Rogers and be known as a gentle person, I guess that's OK. Right? Just a "Won't you be my neighbor?" kind of personality. But most of us don't think, well, that's really the goal is I want to be known as a gentle person.

Well, what's interesting about this eighth virtue on the list is it has so much to do with all of the others. Matter of fact, much of your Christian life depends on this virtue. But much like every other virtue we've studied, we know that it's often misunderstood. People don't understand what it's all about because the world defines it very differently than we do. Our understanding of gentleness is going to have to kind of depart from how even the word might sound in your ears. You think about gentleness. Does a recent convert to Christianity in the first century in southern Galatia, does he want to, in that Roman college, just say it's a Roman soldier, he gets saved, he repents of his sins, puts his trust in Christ. Does he want to be known as that Roman centurion as a gentle Roman centurion, some kind of soldier?

Here's what I'm here to say. That, yes, you cannot be the kind of employee, the employer, you can't be the right kind of father, you can't be the right kind of emperor, if you were the most powerful person in the kingdom, you cannot be the right kind of person without this. This has to... you have to understand that when it comes to what gentleness is, it's not the abdication of all the other things that the Bible calls you to be. Like a person who is zealous for good works, a person who is resolute and committed to certain things. Unyielding. I mean, there are all kinds of issues about fortitude and perseverance and power and authority that God has vested in us to exercise dominion in various aspects and jurisdictions. Or as I put it on the worksheet this week, the questions for this week, in the stewardship of our lives. That stewardship you need a lot of things that are not in contradistinction to gentleness, but gentleness is something that governs it all.

So this morning, what I want to do is try to make some distinctions. And the first distinction I want you to jot down as you turn to Isaiah 40, if you can do both of those at the same time, find



the sequence there that works for you, find your Bibles, go to Isaiah 40 and then write down, if you would, this phrase. When it comes to what we're looking for here, God wants you to be gentle, not weak. He's not looking for weakness. Matter of fact, Christianity is defined by strength. You better have strength. You better have fortitude. You better have resolve. You better have commitment. God is looking to produce a kind of power in your life. He's given, as Paul wrote to Timothy, he's given us a spirit of power, not a spirit of timidity, translated in the English Standard Version as "fear." But it's not the normal word for "fear." It's a word that you're cowardly. God didn't want you to be a coward. You cannot be a coward as a Christian or you're not going to make it very far.

Even as Paul said to Timothy, listen, there are a lot of people who are just ashamed to even be counted with me. I'm an apostle who has become a Roman prisoner and they don't even want to step up and say, I'm with him. And he starts talking about these people with strange names who had deserted him. And it says they're afraid to even stand with me. They don't have the courage to stand with me. I mean, there's one thing in the Christian life you know you cannot fall into the category of and that's being a coward. Matter of fact, that is a description of non-Christians. Have you read Revelation 21? It describes all the people who are in the Lake of Fire. It describes them with a lot of things that you might expect, all the bad words about relating to the immorality and sorcery and enmity and adultery and all these things, idolatry. But starting the list is this word: the cowardly. There's something just antithetical to Christianity that you can summarize with the word coward. God doesn't want you to be a coward. He doesn't want you to be weak. Just like a Roman centurion can exercise what the Bible calls gentleness without abdicating his authority in enforcing the Roman laws in Galatia.

You can picture that, by the way, just by giving him, let's just say he's got a three-month-old infant daughter and you hand him his infant daughter. Could that Roman centurion, rightly, would you expect him to be gentle with his infant daughter? Of course you would. And then, of course, when he's being gentle with his daughter, then, of course, he can't be strong and authoritative. Right? No. Go and try to poke the kid in the eye, insult the little baby girl of the Roman centurion with giant forearms and, you know, the armor on. No, you better not. How about take the baby and yank the baby by the fat rolls on the leg and pull that baby from that Roman centurion and see if he's still powerful and authoritative. The juxtaposition, the comparison, the proximity of the concepts of power and gentleness, they can go hand in hand. Matter of fact, they are to be put side by side.

With every one of these virtues, we've had to go to the Scripture to see what God is. Is God a gentle God? If he is a gentle God, what does that mean? Does it in some way stand as an exemption to his power? Is there some difference between, you know, if you're gentle well then you can't be king, you can't be powerful? Can the lion from the Tribe of Judah exercise gentleness? Which, by the way, in classical Greek, the word gentle, "praotes" is used to describe a domesticated animal, like in a circus you might see in the modern days. It's not foreign to the ancient world where you have a lion that is tamed and doing tricks, you know, rolling over. I mean, you expect that of a little, you know, a dog. But here's a lion, strong. That lion could eat that trainer, but instead he's just doing these tricks, you know, like our dogs. We take our big don't



Doberman Pinscher or our German Shepherd or some pit bull. That dog could consume your one-year-old child who is tottering around your living room. But instead, that dog lays gently and nicely. As a matter of fact, your infant might even lean on or lay down on that dog with that big jaw, it could just take that baby and just kill that baby. But it's domesticated. Does that mean it can't? No. Does it mean it won't? No. Matter of fact, if there's an intruder coming in the middle of the night and that domesticated animal has been trained, I mean, just watch that dog latch on to the leg of an intruder. I mean, there's the right expression of that power and we see that throughout the Scripture. God is a gentle God, but he's also a powerful God.

Drop down to verse 10 of this passage in Isaiah 40. If we're going to define gentleness, we need to define it biblically based on God's character and saying that God is a gentle God. Let's see what we mean by that. Isaiah Chapter 40 verse 10. Speaking of the arrival of God and this is all eschatology, we see this even in the Handel's Messiah about the coming of Christ, not just his first coming when he comes as the Lamb of God, but as he comes back at his second coming and he's bringing his recompense, as it's about to say here in verse 10, with him. He comes back in the book of Revelation, the battle of Armageddon, on a white horse and a sword is coming out of his mouth. That's a powerful scene. And look at how it's described here in verse 10. "Behold, the Lord God comes with might," power. Picture that new convert to Christianity, that Roman soldier. "His arm rules for him." Well, this is far above a soldier. This is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the Soldier of soldiers. "Behold, his reward is with him." He's going to reward his people, the guys on his team with his uniform, but "his recompense" is with him, his recompense "comes before him." As a matter of fact, even before the new Jerusalem comes the battle of Armageddon. Before the eternal state comes the Great White Throne. God is a God bringing retribution, justice, recompense. That's a big deal. That's a powerful God. That's a God you're scared of. Just like you might be scared of a Roman soldier if you're on the wrong side of the law. But if you are his baby daughter, you've got a whole different side of that very same person.

Look at the next verse. "He," when he comes, "he's going to tend his flock like a shepherd." Think about that. The lion who should be eating the lambs for lunch is instead now becoming the shepherd, the lion from the tribe of Judah, and going to treat those lambs kindly. Just like that dog could eat your child but instead it becomes a protector and a defender. And so it is when the Lord God comes, "he will tend his flock like a shepherd." He will care. And it's not like his nose is in the air, his chest is out, "Follow me, everybody. Follow me. I'm the king." No. "He will gather his lambs, the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his chest, he will lead them, those gently it says. "He will gently lead those who are with young." He's totally engaged as a loving, tender shepherd. I mean, there are two sides of God right there side-by-side. One does not cancel out the other. Matter of fact, the grace and goodness and mercy of God, as we've seen throughout these attributes, these virtues, it does not mean what so many people think it means. Just like with kindness, we said it doesn't just mean perpetual niceness or continual compliance. And so it is here. To be gentle does not mean that you are Mr. Rogers and when someone attacks your friend, you stand by and say, "won't you be my neighbor?" You're going to respond. You have a jurisdiction. You have a responsibility. You have a stewardship. And within that stewardship, we see it sometimes in distinction, in contrast, in the same passage.



Let me give you an example when we have the deity dwelling in bodily form among us. I'd like you to turn to the book of Matthew. Matthew Chapter 21, this is the Palm Sunday text and it shows us what is happening on this particular day on Sunday when he comes through the Kidron Valley into the gates of Jerusalem. I know you know the passage, but the problem is we take the patchwork of Scripture sometimes and we read, you know, A and C and D, but we don't see B and F and G, we don't get all the component parts. And if you read at all and you really thought about the contrasts, you might say, wow, it seemed like Jesus is schizophrenic. I want to show you that, because much like Isaiah 40, we have Christ, the perfect template of human beings, giving us both the gentleness and the exercise of great authority in his life. These two are not mutually exclusive.

The triumphal entry, we don't need to read every word here, but you see what's happening. He's coming across the Kidron Valley, off the Mount of Olives. He's coming in and he says, go get this donkey that's tied up. She's got a colt with her. Untie it. Bring it to me. Someone's going to say, "What do you doing?" And say, "Well, the Lord needs them." And why was this the case? Why not just find the white charger? Why not just get a Roman soldier in the providence of God to give up a horse of some centurion or some captain? No, he's going to ride in on a donkey. Why? Well, to fulfill those Zechariah's prophecy, that the king that we have is a gentle king. He's a loving king. He's a merciful king. He's a compassionate king. "Say to the daughter of Zion, the people of Jerusalem, behold, your king is coming to you." Here he is. That's an authoritative word, but he's coming to you. Look at this. "Humble, mounted on a donkey, on a colt, on the foal of a beast of burden," and not what you expect.

And that's not what you see in Revelation 19 when he comes back in the battle of Armageddon. He's mounted on this white horse that seems like a warrior would be. But instead, now he comes through the gates of Jerusalem on a donkey, on a beast of burden, on a, you know, just a peaceful animal. He's looking like he's a peaceful prophet. And yet he's a king. Well, they go do that and what happens? Verse 6, "They did everything that Christ had directed. They brought the donkey and the colt and they put on them all these cloaks," it says in verse 8. They're also put on the road. They cut branches. They wave the branches around. "And the crowds went before him and they were all following, shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. They said, 'Who is this?' The crowd said, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.'".

A prophet is a big enough word. You add the word king to it, you've got a big, majestic scene and it seems to defy what we're talking about because he's riding on a donkey. He's riding on the colt of a donkey. This seems so weird, the contrast here. And yet he's accepting the worship of the crowds as the king and they're all saying, "Save us, save us." He's accepting all of this. And if you remember, we'll see at least a reference to this later, he tells the Pharisees and the chief priest, "if they didn't do it, the rocks would start crying out." That's how appropriate the homage and the worship of Christ is. So, humble picture receiving worship like he's God, the great Prophet, capital "P" as the Bible says in the book of Luke. He's the Prophet, the one who was expected back in Deuteronomy as Moses was promised there would be a great prophet who would come. And so he was the fulfillment of all that.



Well, we have a little bit of that and I guess you see a little bit of that contrast when we take this courtyard, every Palm Sunday, and our kids get the live donkey, we dress someone up who's got a beard that year. And we, you know, make sure he doesn't look too scary. We put him on the donkey, our kids come out, they cut the palm branches. We have our Palm Sunday triumphal entry and everyone goes, "Oh, that's sweet."

Well, we don't play out the rest of this scene, but I want you to look at what else comes here. He comes through the gates of Jerusalem on the donkey, looking very humble and yet receiving this praise, which seems kind of weird because it's a humble picture with a pretty exalted kind of statement that he's this king, this great prophet. Well, then look at verse 12. "He enters the temple and he drove out..." Luke tells us he put a cord together, a whip. Now he's gotten off that donkey and he starts acting like he's riding a white charger. He comes into the temple courtyard there and he starts turning over tables. He didn't say, "Excuse me, could you move this table somewhere else?" He takes them and physically turns them over. "He turned over the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons." And he said, "Excuse me, sir." No, he said, listen, what you're doing is wrong. "It is written," now he's quoting the Old Testament Scriptures about what the temple was supposed to be, "'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." It's funny, that pronoun, "My house," which by the way, is a reminder that the exercise of this kind of authority is within the jurisdiction, or as I put it on the discussion questions, the stewardship that you've been given. Just like you have certain stewardships if you're a parent with your kids or in a certain situation in a church or in a Sunday school class or in a job that you have or in some kind of dominion you exercise in a certain area, you have authority there, and that authority needs to be exercised. Just because you exercise authority in fixing what's wrong as Jesus did, it doesn't mean you're not gentle. The gentle Jesus comes through the gates of Jerusalem, and yet he accepts worship and he exercises great authority.

Look at the next verse, verse 14. This almost seems like it's out of place in our Bibles, "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple," and he said, "Excuse me, I'm angry. I'm fixing things in the temple area so I can't really be bothered with you right now." Do you want to talk about what seems schizophrenic? Here he has just made a whip. He's cracking the whip. He's turning tables over. He's driving people out. He's expressing anger, righteous indignation. And now, people who can't see people, people who can't walk, come to him and he goes, "Oh, let me help you, let me heal you." Again, back and forth and back and forth. A patchwork of the gentleness and the authority. The power and the compassion.

"The chief priest," verse 15, "and the scribes, they saw the wonderful things that he did." That's wonderful. That's Matthew's description of it. The big things, the wowing things. "And all the children crying out in the temple, 'Hosanna the Son of David,' They were indignant." They get mad. "And they said to him, 'Do you hear what these are saying?'" Do you even hear it? And he said there, look at the red letters here in the middle of verse 16, "Yes. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you by that." No. He says, "Haven't you read?" I'm going to defend this. This is exactly what needs to happen. He quotes Psalm 8 and he says, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies





you have prepared praise." He's saying, listen, this has to happen. I'm going to debate you. If you think it's wrong, I'm going to correct you and say it's right. If you think gentleness means that you don't exercise your authority and sometimes do things that are going to displease people, you don't understand gentleness. If you think gentleness means you just show compassion when people are hurting, and when people are wrong, you never correct them, that's not gentleness. Gentleness includes both of these. The gentle person certainly has reactions to things and to people that are different than you might expect, if it's a gentle person, You can't picture Mr. Rogers doing this. Is that analogy in our culture still working? Didn't they make a movie recently about him? You all know who that is, right? I'm not just talking to the senior members of our congregation here am I? Y'all know who Mr. Rogers is.

So he debates his critics. Verse 18. The gentle Jesus who rides in on the back of this donkey. Look at verse 18. What's the next heading there? Jesus does what? Curses the fig tree. Wow. That's not what I expect. You're just healing people on the Temple Mount who are blind. How sweet. How kind, how compassionate, how gentle you are. Well, in the morning, he's returning to the city. He became hungry the next day here. He sees a fig tree, a fig tree's there to produce fruit. It's not producing fruit. It's right by the wayside. It can't produce the fruit for some reason. It should be because it should be there to satisfy the hunger of people who walk by, in this case, Christ, who owns everything. He found nothing on it, but only leaves and he said, "'May no fruit ever come from you again,' and the fig tree," you can imagine this, this is a miracle taking place, "it withers at once," immediately. Wow. That's mean. Well, no, wait a minute. This is what's supposed to be, it's not happening, I am going to now bring judgment on that tree. It's obviously symbolic of all that's going on in Jerusalem as they are about to reject Jesus and put him on a cross. Here is Jesus exercising the authority, just like we saw in Isaiah 40, of God who is depicted as a powerful God who brings recompense, and in this case, correction, debate and confrontation. But Jesus is gentle, just like God who swoops up his lambs in his arms and carries them along. He's the Good Shepherd.

All that to say, and maybe I belabored that more than I should have, but I just need to let you know, gentleness is not weakness, in the old translation "meekness." That may be a good way to remember it. Meekness is not weakness. That's not the point. Just like your dog is not weak simply because he's domesticated. Our call, though, if you're taking notes, you might want to jot this down if you have any strength left. Number two, "Be Gentle In Everyday Life." I could just say be gentle. The idea is the gentleness that is depicted in Christ ought to be seen in your everyday life. We'll get to the confrontations. We'll get to the anger. We'll get to the disapproval and the disagreements later. We'll get to that in a second. But let's just talk about when things are not calling for correctives. When you're in a situation and you're not at battle, there's not an issue that is somehow causing problems. You're just there with people at work, at home or at church, and things are copacetic. Well, I want you to be known, maybe they'll never say it this way, but the love and concern and humility you have, which the Bible would say gentleness, all of that comes together to give you a gentle response, that there is a certain aspect of niceness to the way you respond to people.



Let's think about that just in terms of the church. Jot it down, we won't take time to turn there. But First Thessalonians Chapter 2 speaks of Paul with the church of Thessalonica, and I love that book because First Thessalonians describes a good church. Things are going well. This is not Corinth. This is not Galatia. This isn't even Romans, where in the second half of Romans there were a lot of problems that he's trying to fix. I mean, so much of Thessalonians is like some of those postcards that Jesus sends in the book of Revelation, and he just has commendation for them and no condemnation. And I love the book of First Thessalonians for that. One of the things he says here in Chapter 2 was, my time among you was "like a nursing mother with her infant. And I was just gentle among you." There's our word "prautes" in Greek. I was gentle. I was just, I was kind. I showed it by my selflessness. I wasn't here to advance myself. I was going the extra mile. I was staying the extra hour. I was spending the extra dollar to do for you good things. I was doing it in a kind and loving and a gentle way.

I hope 95% of your interaction with people at church is something where you can exercise that without any concern of disapproval, without any correction, without any rebuke or admonishing. It's just I want to be a kind person here in this situation, because, if you really want to see the two ingredients of that passage, because I really care for your well-being, that's love, it's described in the passage, and humility, not about advancing myself. I didn't come with any kind of, you know, look at me. I'm important. It was I'm not worrying about my own interests. I care about you. That is going to spell gentleness in a biblical sense. Jesus is like that as a shepherd who sees a lamb and the lamb can't get along as well as that lamb because that lamb has young, so he's going to slow down and he's going to be gentle toward those lambs and you're going to see that kind of care and accommodation.

How about this one? I'd like you to turn to this one. Exodus 22, in your business. Exodus 22, drop down to verse 25 in Exodus 22. I would like you to be gentle in your business. Now, business, you've got to do certain things in your job because they're required. It's what your business is all about. Your business, I assume, is about making money or you wouldn't have a business or you wouldn't be working for a business. And so there are rules. And in those rules, you've got to do those things and not everyone's going to like those things that you do. Like, I'm going to charge this for that. Or if we're going to have this service, it's going to cost you this much. But when I go about my work, I look at a situation here where God is talking to the bankers of the Old Testament in Exodus 22, and he says this, verse 25. "If you lend money to any of my people who are with you, who are poor, you shall not be like the moneylenders to him, you shall not exact interest from him.".

Now there are rules for outsiders in lending to the Gentiles, but these in-house loans that you give, he says, I don't want you to charge the exorbitant interest that the outsiders do. So, yes, there are things you've got to do. You're going to invest. You're going to give and lend, rather. I'm not saying you give your money away, but when you lend, I need you to go about your business in a gentle way, thinking compassionately. Here's the example he gives, verse 26. "If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge." So collateral is the overcoat. This guy doesn't have a lot of money. He needs some money to feed his family or whatever. And he says, "OK, here's my cloak. It's a fancy expensive cloak. You take that and I'll be the collateral for the loan. He says, "If you



take his cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down." Well, that's weird. It's collateral. I'm supposed to keep it. Yeah, but here's the deal. We're going to flex here. We're going to understand the deal. We're going to get the money back. We're going to have the surety, the pledge, the collateral. But I'm going to think about the realities of how this is all affecting you. So talk about going the extra mile. I'm going to think the way God wants me to think, verse 27, and think "that's his only covering and it is his cloak for his body," it's his blanket at night, "what else is he going to sleep in? And if he cries to me, I will hear." Because here's what we need. This kind of gentle compassion, he says, "for I'm compassionate."

The same God who would say to that same guy who if he did something that was blasphemous, even in the ceremonial law, if he ate pork, if he didn't come to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage, if he violated the Sabbath day, if he didn't circumcise his child on the eighth day, God would have judgment there. There would be discipline. But in this case, just as he goes about his business and he needs a loan and he goes to the people in Israel who can have the money to make the loan, here he is saying, "Man, I really wish I had my cloak at least at night that I could sleep in." And God says. "If he cries out to me, I'm going to hear him." And I want to see your business dealings as not very gentle, not very compassionate." I need you to look at your work and to think, is there anything in this work where I can, I'm not talking about conflict, I'm not talking about disagreement, I'm not talking about your anger and something that's provoked you, just in your daily course of life, can I at church reflect the gentleness of God? Can I at work reflect the gentleness of God?

Turn to this one with me, please. Titus Chapter 3. I would like to think in a third category about our interaction with the world, and that's when you should groan, "Oh, the world," especially now. Right? The world. It's a mess. Well, this messy world that has absolutely pitted against everything that we value, as a matter of fact, the Christ that we love, the unique exclusivity of salvation in Christ, they mock it, they malign it. We're in an environment that is hostile to our faith. One reason, by the way, gentleness sermons, you won't hear any in the New Jerusalem because there'll be no need for us to have to sit here and work on being gentle because there'll be no problems there. The world won't hate us. There'll be a king on the throne, Jesus Christ, everything will be copacetic and fine. Being gentle will be easy. Right now, being gentle is hard. It's hard because we live in a world that unlike our church I hope where 95% of the time I can just focus on being a compassionate, gentle person and at work I can do my work, make sure I hit all the bases, but I'm also going to see if I can be a gentle and kind, compassionate businessman or whatever my job is.

But when I look at the world, everything is pitted against our Christianity, not everything, but a lot of things. In the first century, the leaders there were even more pitted against biblical Christianity than our leaders are. Look at verse 1, "Remind these people," Paul says to Titus, the pastor here in Crete that's full of a lot of trouble and the leaders aren't very good. They're anti-Christian leaders for the most part, and certainly the Roman authorities were. It says this: "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities." That's a good word, "Hypotasso," find themselves underneath the leadership and have that, and here's a good connection conceptually, the gentleness is my willingness to come underneath and be submissive. "Do I obey everything





that my leaders tell me?" No, I'm not going to do that. Matter of fact, some things are in direct conflict, as we'll learn when we get back to the book of Acts. We have that conflict between obeying God and obeying our government. There are certain conflicts at times.

But the idea here is you need to be subjected, submitting in your heart, "obedient," do what you're supposed to do, "and be ready for every good work. Speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling." Now it's easy to speak evil of our leaders and it's easy for us to quarrel. All you got to do is turn on talk radio and learn how to quarrel with people, but instead it says "to be gentle." Now, that's a different Greek word, by the way. If you have your Greek New Testament on your phone or whatever, that's not the same word that we have, *prautes*, in our passage, but it's a similar word, obviously, in concept. That's why our English translators give us the word gentle. But here, right next to it, look at this word. But "to show perfect courtesy," that is the same word. That is the Greek word *prautes*. That is what's translated elsewhere as the word gentleness. So we have two words for gentleness stacked on top of each other and says, listen, in a world that's in conflict with what you are all about, I need you to be submissive, I need you to hold your tongue, I need you to be gentle and be gentle. Be gentle, not just toward the people who are gentle toward you. Be gentle toward all people.

How do I do that? Well, you can be thoughtful about your past, verse 3. "We ourselves were once foolish and disobedient." Therefore, the people I'm concerned about being gentle, today I see them currently as "foolish and disobedient," but I got to think I was once foolish and disobedient. "I was led astray." They're led astray. "I was a slave to various passions and pleasures," they're slaves now to various passions and pleasures. "I was passing my days in malice and envy and I hated others, I was hating one another." And that's what they're doing now. I know it's easy for me to be angry at them and mean toward them. But there needs to be a gentleness and a, as it's translated, a perfect courtesy, a gentleness and a gentleness in our words and in our behavior. You need to kind of take the edge off all the hostility because you live in a world that doesn't pat you on the back and that's just how it's going to be. But God is calling you, not only in your church, which I hope is the easiest, but also at your job, which I hope is honest work and you're able to do that in a way that you just have to flavor all those rules of work with a gentle disposition. And then in the world, that will be the hardest. But we need to be gentle citizens, gentle interactions in our culture, even though we have to bite our lip a lot when we want to speak evil, but we don't because we remember with compassion where they're at, Second Corinthians 4:4, enslaved to their sins, blinded by the enemy as we once were. I'm going to have a little bit more patience and gentleness and compassion with them than I would naturally, in my flesh, want to. Be gentle in everyday life, church, business, society.

Now let's get to the hard things. Two more things real quick. Number three, you need to let, and this is very carefully worded here so jot it down if you're taking notes, "Let Gentleness Season Your Disapproval." We've already got a taste of that in Titus 3. Let gentleness season, like salt, season your disapproval, because here's the problem, even at church. Right? I'm saying 5% because I'm making up numbers here. There are going to be things that I don't approve of. There are going to be people I don't approve of. There are going to be things that happen in my small group that I don't approve of. They'll be policies I don't approve of. And we're going to say I have



disapproval here. I don't like this. I'm saying what needs to flavor that, season that, what needs to infiltrate and mitigate that is the fact that I am going to focus on me being gentle, gentle in my disapproval.

How can I, and you've heard this phrase before, how can I disagree if I need to disagree without being unnecessarily disagreeable? Right? You've heard that, right? I would like to disagree without being disagreeable. I don't want to be quarrelsome. The Bible says I need to be gentle with all. That's the picture that Paul gives Timothy. He says, listen, you got to correct those who are in opposition. I'm not saying you don't voice your disapproval, but I'm saying that we understand that gentleness needs to season all of that. There are going to be things, certainly, that you don't care for.

I would jot this down if you're taking notes, Second Corinthians Chapter 10. There are times... Let's turn there. We might as well, right? No one's passed out yet from the heat this morning. So let's turn to Second Corinthians Chapter 10. Paul is talking about the fact when things go well and there's nothing to disapprove, man, I'm a super gentle apostle. But sometimes when I leave and I have to write letters like the letter I'm writing now or that I wrote before, First Corinthians, this is Second Corinthians, I had to be really bold and I had to confront you and I had to disagree. There was disapproval about what you were doing. I had to state that disapproval because, I mean, that's what I should do as a Christian. I can't just be constantly complying to whatever you want. That's not godly. So I know that there's kind of one side of my interaction with you when everything's copacetic, I'm just known as gentle. But then there's that side that seems like I'm hard and harsh.

Paul describes it this way, verse 1, "I, Paul, myself entreat you." I mean, all I want is for us to follow God's truth and follow God's word. "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ," just like Christ. And what do I find in Christ as I read Matthew 21? It almost seems schizophrenic. It's not that he was schizophrenic, but there was a reasonable discharge of his oversight, sometimes it called for gentleness and kindness, sometimes that gentleness and kindness seasoned the disapproval that he had, and maybe even went further, as we will in just a second, look at something called anger. But right now, disapproval. He says with all of that, he says, "I who am humble when face to face with you. But bold toward you when I'm away." Right? I wrote you that letter and it was rough. So people think this is a quote of his critics, but I think this is how he is. He comes there, everything's fine when he's present with them, it's going well. And then he leaves, things get bad so he has to write some bold letters. He doesn't seem so gentle and humble anymore.

He says, "I beg of you," verse 2, "I beg of you that when I am present, I may not have to show boldness with such confidence," that harshness, that hard... I hope I don't have to be hard to you "as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh." You're wrongly accusing me and so much of what's left in Second Corinthians is going to be a defense of that. He's saying, listen, I'm going to lay into you right now and I have to, I have to use that boldness. Matter of fact, I'm going to engage in a real disapproval, a disapproval that's described as warfare, verse 4. He says, I'm not waging war against people with fleshly tools. Right? "The



weapons of our warfare," verse 4, "are not of the flesh," I'm not beating people over the head with clubs. But there is a weapon that we have in our debate and our disapproval that's argumentation. "Divine power to destroy strongholds." It changes people's minds. Actually, "We're destroying," talk about disagreement, verse 5, "arguments and every lofty opinion that raises itself up against the knowledge of God." If something you say is wrong, it's not biblical, I need to correct it. If there are problems in the church of Corinth, you need to listen. If some people think that we're doing the wrong thing, and we're doing the right thing, there needs to be a response to that. "We try to take every thought captive to obey Christ." We're not talking about our own thoughts, we're talking about people who have deviant thoughts or wrong thoughts about the truth. And by the way, if you're really going to be pugnacious, if you're going to be tenaciously wrong and entrenched in your wrong, he says, well, then in my authority, as the apostle Paul says, I'm "ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete." If that's what you got, I'm coming in, I'm going to make it right.

Now again within the jurisdiction, if your temple grounds are not your temple grounds, well, then you don't have the right to tip over the tables. Right? It's not your neighbor's kids you're called sometimes to correct, it's your own kids. And so it is with Paul within his jurisdiction, or as I put it on the discussion questions, in your stewardship you've got a responsibility to disapprove. But Paul even says, listen, I know that all the meekness and gentleness of Christ, whenever I can be gentle in my disapproval, I'm going to and I'm not going to be unnecessarily disagreeable.

So much more we could say about that. I get the word seasoned, by the way, out of Colossians Chapter 4 verses 5 and 6, and I wanted to turn you there, but at least jot it down if you're a copious note-taker. We need to have all of our interactions, he says, with outsiders, which implies disapproval, we don't agree with the outsiders who mock Christ, maligned Christ, reject the gospel, he says, I want to season my conversation, I want it to be flavored with salt and he calls that gracious speech. I want my gracious words and my kindness to come through. I want to be gentle with people, even though I have to disagree with people.

I would hope that you remember a word when you think about the word gentleness that comes from First Peter Chapter 3, even in the warfare of apologetics. When someone accuses us wrongly of something as a movement, as a theology, "we make a defense to everyone, ready to make a defense for the hope that's in us, yet we do it flavored with this: gentleness and respect," same word prautes and respect, which is interesting, the word "Phobos" there. The idea of I have a rightful trepidation about the fact that I'm dealing with a person made in the "Imago Dei," the image of God. These are big deals to disagree. These are big deals to disapprove, and I do that with a kind of trepidation.

Let me step it up one last point to get to the area that makes it the most difficult. The reason that gentleness won't be a battle in the New Jerusalem is because there won't be anything there to make you angry. But right now, there are lots to make you angry. So let's put it this way. I put it, number four, that you got to let gentleness, "Let Gentleness Inform Your Anger." You're going to get angry. Matter of fact, you can't be a Christian, a real Christian, you cannot be a godly Christian who is not angry periodically. I don't want to be angry all the time, but I'm going to be angry



because in this world, as it says in Psalm 119:53, we need to see that those who disregard the God who we love, that makes us, he says, "hot with indignation."

If you're in a public school classroom and the teacher happens to be your mother, she's a public school teacher, and you're in a school classroom of 30 kids like we used to do in the old days, you had kids in a room, and you had your teacher, which is your mother at the front, being abused or accosted or insulted or people throwing, you know, stuff at her, spit wads at her, you would be indignant. You should be, that's your mother. You love your mother. You can't approve of what's going on around you and in some cases, it just makes you angry, it makes you mad. In the world we live in, we're going to have that. But I want to make sure that gentleness informs my anger. How's it going to do that?

Five ways and then we're done. Ready? Number one, Proverbs 12:16, Proverbs 12:16. We should know that gentleness asks this question. It asks this question: Should I even be angry right now? Should I even be angry? Gentleness asks the question, should I be angry? Here's the passage. Proverbs 12:16. "The vexation of fools," I love that word, vexation, like the annoyance of fools, "is known at once." They just react and respond. "But the prudent ignores an insult." The question is, should this make me mad? Maybe this is just an insult to overlook. Maybe it's someone in the classroom looking at me saying your hair looks stupid, not your mother's a jerk, or throwing something at your mother. Well, you know what? I should overlook the one and the other one I can't overlook. There needs to be a sense in which, I guess the way to ask it when I think about should I even be angry about this, is this really my glory at stake or God's glory at stake? Is this my preference at stake or is this God's word at stake? There are times to be angry and there are times to not be angry. You've got to take the vexation, the annoyance, and say, I don't even think I should be angry about this. So cool off, Mike. Calm down. Don't get mad. I've got to be able to assuage my own anger by knowing that gentleness, the concept of gentleness is sometimes going to modify and mitigate my natural responses to where I'm not going to sit here and blow up with anger.

Secondly, Proverbs 14:29. This one's true and we see it all over the Bible. Proverbs 14:29. Gentleness says this: slow down. Slow down. Here's how it's put in Scripture. "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but the one who has a hasty temper exalts folly." If you're quick to get angry, I know we've got a problem because gentleness is always saying, wait a minute. My heart wants to be gentle. So if I'm going to get angry about this and it's the right thing to get angry about, here's the deal. I just got to slow down, get there slowly, slow to anger, over and over, that's a prudent, wise thing to do. So I always want to say, gentleness in my heart as God produces that is always going to have me ask, is this something to be mad about? And number two, slow down. We don't ever want a reaction. We want a response. Road rage is a reaction. Right? You don't like the next day get mad about someone cutting you off on the on-ramp of the interstate. You do it immediately. It takes you 15 milliseconds, not 15 minutes to get mad about that. That's reaction. Hasty in your temper. We don't want that.

Number three, Proverbs 19:19. Speaking of anger, we need to ask this, gentleness helps us ask this. Is this an overreaction? Is this a commensurate response? It speaks of a man who has great



anger, great wrath, and he's always getting himself in trouble because he always overresponse to everything. Do you overresponse? It may be that that should make you mad, because that's God's honor. That's God's truth. That's God's glory. That's the right thing to be upset about but you're way too upset about it. Gentleness is going to say, put a cap on this. There's a certain truth to anger being present and it ought to be present, but be careful how you respond.

Martin Luther used to talk about the fact that some of his best ministry happened through his anger. It was motivated by anger because here's the thing. In the 15th century, you know this, someone needed to get angry at the Catholic Church. That just needed to happen. I hope someone gets angry about it, and Martin Luther was known as one who got angry about it. Then he said this. I'm not going in torching cathedrals. What I'm doing is correcting this in the proper way and responding with correcting the theology of our salvation of the gospel. And he said that. And one interesting thing, just to paraphrase it, he said it helps to sort out the vexations of my heart, to have that godly indignation, that godly righteous anger, and to have that motivate what's to come next. But I don't want to overreact. Gentleness helps us to ask, should I even be angry? It tells me to slow down. It helps me to ask the question, is this an overreaction?

How about this one? The only one not from Proverbs. This is Ecclesiastes 7:9. Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 verse 9. It says, "Do not be quick in your spirit to become angry." And of course, we've had that many times in the Scripture. Don't be quick to be angry. Then it says this: "For anger lodges in the heart of a fool." It lodges, it sticks there. It lasts too long. But I said anger is something that you're going to do, as a matter of fact, it's commanded in Scripture. Ephesians Chapter 4 says, "Be angry." That's a command. All of us should be angry in a world at certain times about certain things. If it's God's honor, God's truth, God's glory, that should make me mad. But I need to not sin and in not sinning I need to make sure that my anger is about the right thing. That it's not quick to get there. That it's not an overreaction. And then do you know the next verse? If you've been in marital counseling you know the next verse, right? It says this. "Be angry and don't sin; and do not," here's the next verse, "let the sun go down on your anger." Get it done. Get it through it. Get it finished.

Matthew Henry, do you have Matthew Henry's commentary? I'm sure you do at your house, on your computer, on your phone. I mean, he seems like such a just a nice guy, right? 300 years ago plus, he writes this great commentary of the Scriptures, the Matthew Henry Bible Commentary. It says some amazingly kind things. Some of the stuff that he wrote was just so sweet. It seems this man must have been a Mister Rogers of, you know, of Christian scholarship. He talked about anger. He said this about anger. There's a wise and smart anger. The smart anger he described as like the spark that comes off of a flint. He says it's there. It sparks, it sparks up and then it goes away. To paraphrase what he said next, he says, it doesn't start a forest fire that rages for days. So the fourth question that gentleness helps me to ask is, has this gone on too long? Am I being angry too long? Don't let the sun go down on your anger is a great poetic way of saying that anger should not lodge and get stuck in your heart. That's called bitterness. That's a kind of fomenting of your anger that does no one any good. Yeah, there are times to respond rightly with the wise kind of anger that the Bible speaks of that motivates constructive actions. "I know you said, well. Jesus destroyed things in the temple." Yeah, that was a constructive kind of destruction. There





are parents who destroy certain things that their kids have and that is a constructive kind of destruction. That's a different story. But the idea is we have within our jurisdiction times for us to respond and to respond rightly, to bring things in line with God's will.

Last one. Number five. If your gentleness is going to inform your anger. I mean, this is the most basic thing we're getting to this. We're all ramping up to this statement when it regards things that make us mad in this world. Proverbs 16:32. Proverbs 16:32 says, "Whoever is slow to anger," which we already said three, four times now, "is better than the mighty." Well, here's the parallel section. "Whoever rules his spirit," rules his spirit, think that through, "is better than one who takes a city." If you're going to take a city, if you're a warrior and you're going to take down that city in the ancient world, you better figure out how you're going to do it, are you going to go over the wall, going to go around, going to have a group over here, a detail here, am I going to try and dig through the foundations of the walls, am I'm going to send over flaming arrows. How am I going to take this city? There's a strategy to it.

Well, the problem with most people is they're reacting to their emotions as opposed to in the world there are lots of things you don't like that make you mad, frustrated, you disapprove of it, and you may need to act on that disapproval. You need to start thinking about what is the strategic way to respond. In other words, if it's feeling, an emotion, an action and there's no brain in between the two, see, then that's not informed by gentleness. Gentleness is a kind of disposition that says think about the right and most constructive way to respond to this. Gentleness always informs our anger. It mitigates our anger. It shapes our anger. It makes it more of a wise and godly response that sometimes is driven and fueled by anger. But it is not a reaction and therefore it's not starting the forest fire, as Matthew Henry said, that burns on for days and does all kinds of destruction. It's like a welding torch that does its work and it gets hot and it deals with the issue and it fixes it.

Gentleness, I'm trying to say, is a stabilizing force in our life. It's not something probably that someone will come up to you and say, well, you are a gentle person, unless, of course, you're the caricature of the milquetoast, kind of weak, feeble person. But as a strong, courageous Christian, zealous for good works, there's going to be something about your life that stabilizes you. It's one of these virtues that kind of is under the surface of the water. It's like the keel on a boat. I remember years ago when the America's Cup was a big deal. San Diego Yacht Club was winning every year. I even started to watch it on TV because people were into this. I'd done a tiny little bit of sailing just, you know, here and there on a tiny little boat. But I remember coming onto the freeway on the I-5, and just as I was coming onto it, there was the America's Cup boat.

They started to design some of them back then after the New Zealand race boats that had these giant keels in the bottom. And the keels, of course, are certainly for a sailboat, something that's not just a ballast and a weight, although it is that to keep that boat upright. But there's a very strategic sense to which that fin, if you will, that goes down into the water like a scag on a surfboard. It keeps that direction, certainly as the wind comes against that boat and the sail is pushed, it keeps that thing going. So much so that even in our English parlance of regular vocabulary, we still talk about someone who's even-keeled. The keel provides that stability and it



takes it in the right direction. And it's not, as it's put in Scripture, driven and tossed by every wind. The Christian life, whether it's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness or faithfulness. Right? There is something about gentleness that keeps all of that in place, moving in the right direction that gives us stability that says that's the right reaction, that's the appropriate reaction, that's the kind of intelligent response that we need in a world that's messed up.

Praise God that we're going to a day when we don't need to worry about our temptation to respond wrongly because the world will all be in sync with God's will. But until then, what we need is for people to look at us and say there's an even-keeled person in the exercise of his or her authority and the jurisdiction that God has given them. They're practicing the virtues and Fruit of the Spirit because there's something under the surface you may not see and maybe never identify. But it's that gentleness that walks in step with the Spirit that's looking for the good. It's that humble submission to the will of God that keeps us on track.

I hope that people can say that about you and your Christian life as we seek to put into practice the gentleness that God wants to produce in our life.