

# OpenTheo

## Kindness, Goodness and Gentleness



### **Charisma and Character** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses three fruits of the Spirit, kindness, goodness, and gentleness, and how they are related to each other. He explains the Greek words used in the Bible to describe these fruits and their meanings. Gregg emphasizes that even non-believers have a sense of basic human decency, but Christians should strive to exemplify these qualities in their character and behavior. He also touches on the importance of meekness, ruling one's spirit, and cultivating an equanimous attitude towards life.

### **Transcript**

Tonight, in continuing our studies in the fruit of the Spirit, we're going to look at three fruits, I guess we'd say, of the Spirit, which are closely related to each other. We found in some of the earlier studies that we've done here that Paul tends to group thoughts together that are sometimes similar to each other in lists, when he says we'll put on, and he'll list a number of things that we should add to our character. Or he'll say, walk in, and he'll list a whole bunch of traits that are important for Christians to walk in.

And we have a lot of passages, we looked at seven of them once in one of our studies a couple weeks ago, where Paul, actually it may have been just last week, it seems like a long time ago, where Paul actually listed a lot of different character traits or behavior patterns that Christians should be endeavoring to follow in their lives. And we're talking about charisma and character in this series. Charisma being a reference, it's the Greek word for the gifts of the Spirit, and character being something that divides into separate character traits, and these are the fruit of the Spirit.

And among the things that Paul lists, some of them differ one from another in dramatic ways, and others of them seem almost synonymous with each other. In Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23, which we've looked at every week for the last several weeks, because this is where Paul lists what he calls the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23, Paul says, So far we've looked in previous lessons at love and joy and peace and longsuffering.

Tonight we're going to look at kindness, goodness, and gentleness. Now, if you're looking

at the list that Paul gave, you'll note we skipped over one, and that is faithfulness. We're not going to leave it altogether.

In fact, some translations will say faith rather than faithfulness. We'll talk about that in another session. The reason I'm skipping that and including gentleness, or as the King James reads it, meekness, is because these three are very close to one another in meaning.

They're not perhaps identical in meaning, but it's very hard in some cases to make a distinction between what they are. So we'll look at them all together and see exactly what it is in the character of the believer that Paul is pointing to by the use of these terms. Now, because of the nearness of the definitions of these terms, I've done a lot more work today and yesterday while I was working on this than I usually do in looking up the Greek words and trying to figure out what the nuances are of the individual Greek words.

I'm not a Greek scholar, and most of the time I avoid intensive study into the Greek. But when you've got words that are so similar, unless I'm just going to say, well, let's group them all together and say they're all the same thing, I want to know what it is about the various Greek words that Paul used that nuances them to justify the use of all of them instead of just one of them to give the concept. And one of the things that makes it even more difficult is because we have in the list that we've just looked at kindness, goodness, and gentleness.

Well, in the King James Version, these three are called gentleness, goodness, and meekness. And if you're paying attention, you'll notice that in the King James Version, the third of these is called meekness, whereas in the New King James, which is the version I'm working from here, it is called gentleness. Meekness and gentleness are words that are interchanged between the King James and the New King James.

But what makes it more confusing is that whereas the New King James changes the King James gentleness or meekness to gentleness, it changes the New King James gentleness to kindness. That is, in the King James, it's gentleness, goodness, and meekness. In the New King James, the same Greek words are translated, whatever it was I said they're translated, kindness, goodness, and gentleness.

So gentleness moves to the end of that list, and that's because there's such a similarity in meaning. I've given you in the notes that I handed out, because I don't expect you to remember just by hearing what these Greek words are and what they are said to mean. More than usual, I've quoted a number of lexicons and other authorities to try to figure out what these words are talking about.

And the word kindness in the New King James, the first of these that we're looking at, in the Greek it's *krestotes*. And the definition given by Arndt, Bauer, and Gingrich, which is

a major Greek lexicon that is authoritative, and a lot of scholars refer to it, *krestotes* is said to mean goodness, kindness, generosity. Now, they don't list it, but you could also put down gentleness, because that's how the King James version translated it, and some other versions still favor that.

So, goodness, kindness, and generosity. Now, one thing that makes that confusing, of course, is that the next word we're going to consider is translated goodness also, but this word means goodness, of a sort, anyway. But the definition is not identical.

This word *krestotes* translated kindness means the opposite of harshness and severity. In other words, it is sort of like gentleness. There is a reason why the King James version referred to it as gentleness rather than kindness.

But the words are obviously very similar in meaning in English as well. But the way we know that the word *krestotes*, in contrast to severity, is because Paul uses it as a direct contrast to the word severity in Romans 11, 22, where he says, Therefore, consider the goodness and the severity of God. To further complicate matters, the word goodness here is *krestotes*.

Now, that does complicate things, because *krestotes* is translated as kindness in the list of the fruit of the Spirit, but another word is translated goodness in that same list. But now Paul is translating *krestotes* goodness, so you can see how much overlap there is in these words. But this could be, Paul's words in Romans 11, 22 could be translated, if we want to be consistent.

Therefore, consider the kindness and severity of God. On those who fell, severity, but toward you, kindness. If you continue in his kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off.

So, kindness and severity, the polar opposite aspects of God's righteousness. On the one hand, he is kind and gentle and loving and generous and well disposed, but he is also severe and harsh toward some. He is a God of judgment as well.

But it's obvious that Paul considers this word *krestotes* to be the opposite of severity. One Greek scholar, Spiros Zodiades, said that this word means the grace of character that is contrary to all meanness and austerity. So, mean-spiritedness is the opposite of what Paul is talking about here, and harshness and severity, and austerity.

A very similar word to it in the Greek, one that's related to *krestotes*, is used of objects. Like when Jesus says that no one who's tasted the old wine immediately wants the new wine, because they say the old is better. The word better is a Greek word related to *krestotes* here, and it speaks of wine that's mellowed because of age.

So, in other words, it has no harshness to it. It's a wine that is mellowed by age. The bite, the harshness of it is no longer there.

And, of course, that's not talking about a personal character trait of people, but you can see there's a similarity to the character trait we're talking about. Also, when Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light, in Matthew 11, 30, he was using a Greek word that's a cognate of this word *crestotes*. My burden is gentle.

My burden is amiable. My yoke, that is, he says, my yoke is not harsh. So, a person who has this trait of kindness is not harsh.

They're not severe, at least not at inappropriate times, and that's the point. God is both this and severe, and therefore there must be times when it's appropriate to be kind, or *crestotes*, and also times when it's proper to be severe. And this is something that we need to see in Paul's description of Christian character.

It's not one-dimensional. Christians aren't some kind of cardboard cutout that only have one trait and nothing complex about them. There are times when severity is called for, and there are times when generosity and kindness and other character traits that are amiable are called for.

So, Paul talks about kindness as a trait that we need that is contrary to severity. Now, the next word, which is translated goodness... Hello, folks. Good to see you.

The word that Paul uses that is translated in the List of the Fruit of the Spirit as goodness is *agathosoune*. Now, you think I said that fast so I wouldn't be known to mispronounce it, right? No, I know how to pronounce it because it's got an accent. It's *agathosoune*.

If there was a real Greek-speaking person here, I probably wouldn't sound too authentic to him. But that word is from the Greek word *agathos*, which is good. It just means good.

And this particular noun, according to the lexicons I consider it, means active goodness, uprightness. Now, what's the difference, then, between *agathosoune* and *crestotes*? Both of them can be translated goodness. We saw that *crestotes* was translated goodness in the New King James in Romans 11.22. And now this other word is translated goodness in Galatians 5.22. So, what's the difference between them? Well, that's a good question.

In your notes, I think I've given you some scholars' attempt to answer that question. Jerome, an early church translator who first translated the New Testament and the Old into Latin, and modern scholars who follow him, have suggested that *crestotes* and *agathosoune* represent the kindlier aspect of goodness in the first word and the sterner quality when doing good to others, but not by gentle means in the second word. That is to say that when you have to be gentle with somebody, when you have to be kindly and generous toward them, and treat them very mercifully, that is *crestotes*.

When you have to be a little more severe with them, but not because you're angry, not because your temper is short, but because this is what it's called for. They need a stern rebuke. They need some correction.

This is agreeable with the second word, agathosoune. Both of them have to do with goodness. But as Jerome says, the first word has to do with the kindlier aspect of goodness, and agathosoune, the second word, has to do with more the stern aspects of standing for righteousness and standing for what's good, even if that requires being a little bit confrontational, perhaps.

Both aspects are part of being good, and both aspects are part of God's character. Another scholar, Lightfoot, a well-known translator also, he says that crestotes is the kindly disposition toward others, while agathosoune is kindly action on their behalf. Now, Lightfoot then, and Zodiates follows him in this in his lexicon also, says that these words are kind of the same, except one speaks more of the attitude or the disposition.

The other speaks of the outworking of the behavior. Now, obviously, that's not agreeable with what Jerome said. It's clear that scholars are not altogether sure what the difference is between these words.

There is obviously not a precisely identical range of meaning for the two words, because Paul uses them as separate things in the fruit of the spirit. But the difference for them is not real obvious. Scholars differ among themselves as to what differs.

But apparently, some of the top scholars believe that the first of these words speaks of the gentler, kindlier aspects of goodness, and the other one speaks of the sterner, more uncompromising, confrontational aspects of doing what's right. Another scholar thinks that one speaks of the disposition of the heart, the general attitude, the grace in the soul, whereas the other word speaks of action, goodness in terms of righteous action. I don't know which of these is true, because I'm not a Greek scholar, and apparently even if I was, not all Greek scholars agree.

So even if I was a Greek scholar, I wouldn't be any better off than I am now. I'd just have one or the other opinion or a third one. So all I can say is both of these have something to do with being good.

Both of them have to do with standing up for what's right. But one has the aspect of being mellow, not being harsh about it. And there are times when Jesus was harsh, and there are times when he was very gentle.

And Jesus is, of course, the model of all the fruit of the Spirit. We can read of the harshness or the severity of Christ in a number of places, especially when he stood up to the rulers of the synagogue, who rebuked him for healing on the Sabbath, or when he stood up to the Pharisees. And one of the harshest, probably, speeches in all of literature, I would imagine, is what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 23, when repeatedly he said, I woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.

And then he gave scathing denunciations of their regular practices and their hypocrisy

and how evil they were. Now, he's not being very gentle there. There are times when Jesus was severe in his treatment of people.

But on other occasions, he was very gentle. When he was with a sinner whose conscience was afflicted and who was a broken person, he dealt rather gently, it seems to me, with the woman at the well. One of the places where Jesus' gentleness and consideration and so forth seems to come out, that's always stood out in my mind, is the story that we find in several of the Gospels.

I'd like to look at Mark's Gospel for his version of this story. Mark chapter 5. And we're going to pick it up in the middle of the story because there's kind of two stories woven together here. There's the story of a man named Jairus, who came to Jesus because his daughter was very sick at the point of death.

And he was begging Jesus to come and heal her. And Jesus agreed to do so. And as Jesus was on his way to the house of Jairus, another person in need came up to him, but not confronting him, but behind him, a woman who had had an issue of blood.

She'd had internal bleeding for a number of years. And she'd spent all of her money on physicians. But she'd only gotten worse.

And she had the conviction that if she would just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed. And sure enough, she pressed through the crowd. She did touch his garment.

She was healed. She was a little concerned that he might be harsh with her, and she didn't want to reveal herself when he said, Who touched me? Because after all, she exposed him to what the Jews would regard as ceremonial defilement. If a person had an issue of blood, they were defiled.

And anything they touched was defiled. Under the law, strictly speaking, Jesus should have been considered defiled for at least a week because of this issue of blood this woman had, and she touched him. And so Jesus, she thought, might be angry at her for doing that.

But she got what she wanted. She got healed. And when Jesus found it was her and so forth, he said, Daughter, go in peace.

Your faith has made you well. He didn't show any harshness to her. But the kindness of Jesus is seen in the remainder of the story in a way that has always been remarkable to me.

And it's in verse 35 and following, While he was still speaking, that is to the woman who had just been healed by touching his garment, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, that is Jairus' house, who said, Your daughter is dead. Why trouble

the teacher any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he said to the ruler of the synagogue, Do not be afraid. Only believe.

And then he went, of course, and raised her from the dead. But, you say, what's so exceptional about that? I don't know. I've always seen Jesus' considerateness very graphically in this story for some reason.

He hears the news that the man has heard. He doesn't even wait for the man's reaction. He knows how that news is going to affect the man.

The man has been hoping against hope that Jesus might get there in time. His daughter was even at the point of death when he came to Jesus and he thought probably every moment, Is it too late? Is it too late? And now the news comes, it is too late. And the man's heart must have just sunk within him.

But Jesus, knowing how this news would affect the man, he just turns to him and he says, Listen, don't be afraid. It's not too late. Just have faith.

We'll work this out. And Jesus gently deals with people when they're hurting. But there are others that he doesn't deal gently with, and I made reference to some of the cases like that.

If you look over at the book of Jude, which is a very small book, only one chapter long, immediately prior to the book of Revelation, which makes it rather easy to find. There are a number of books in the Bible that are only one chapter, and most of them are not easy to find, but this one is pretty easy if you can find the book of Revelation. And just before Revelation we have this book.

In verse 22 and 23, Jude is talking about evangelism, methods and styles of evangelism. And he says in verse 22, He says, You on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others, save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. Now, on some do this and on others do that.

Now, what's the contrast? With some people, you have compassion. You hurt with them. You ache with them.

You're sensitive to them. You're gentle and kind with them. There are just certain times when that's the only appropriate Christ-like thing you can do with a person who's hurting.

At other times, a little more abruptness. It's very like snatching someone out of the fire. Using fear to get them to do the right thing, to get them to repent.

This is called for in other cases. You see, sometimes you use the gentle, the kind, the friendly, compassionate approach. Other times it's more drastic.

You need to make sure you don't even compromise yourself in any way in contact with these people. You hate even the garment stained with the flesh and you snatch them from the fire with a considerably more abrupt and severe approach. Both of these are appropriate in their place and in their time.

Each one, you know, you say, well, okay, now what are the rules? How do we know when to do this one, when to do that one? I wish it was so easy as to just lay out the rules and say, well, okay, in situation A, you use this approach. In situation B, you use this other approach. And it would be wonderful if we could do that.

However, that would reduce the Christian walk to a set of rules, which fortunately and unfortunately, I guess, has its upside and its downside. It isn't. Christianity is not a set of rules.

On one hand, it would be nice if it were. We wouldn't have to do any thinking. We wouldn't even have to be led by the Spirit.

We could just have it all mimeographed out and check the rules every time we have to make a decision about something. But that's not what Jesus came to establish. He came to establish a walk in the Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit produces His fruit. And if we're walking in the Spirit, there will be times when the fruit He produces in us will be kindness, gentleness, compassion, and softness, and a total absence of severity or harshness in our behavior toward persons because the Holy Spirit knows that that's the right approach. At other times, the Holy Spirit will put a fire and a zeal for righteousness and goodness in a confrontational kind of approach, which is equally good, equally spiritual, and equally appropriate in its own place.

And both of these things are in the list. In fact, they're right next to each other in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. Christotes and Agathosunni.

Kindliness. Kindness and goodness. Unfortunately, it seems to me that Christians very frequently, though it is true sometimes they're severe and sometimes they're kind-hearted, they get it reversed as to when they should be.

A lot of times, if you're not walking in the Spirit, it's an amazing thing how you've got a 50-50 chance if there's two approaches to take, 50-50 chance of getting it right. It seems amazing how often Christians get it wrong. I remember hearing of a case where a Pentecostal preacher was preaching to his congregation and in walked a couple of ladies in very immodest clothing, many dresses, and this was a holiness Pentecostal church.

They didn't wear short dresses there. These women were extremely gaudy in their dress and lots of makeup and lots of earrings and jewelry and the stuff that Pentecostal holiness people don't like and very short skirts. And the preacher decided the anointing



came on him to start preaching against those things.

And so he said, if you wear many dresses and many skirts, you're not welcome in this church. And he really started leveling against this kind of gaudy and immodest behavior. Well, afterwards, the women did sit through the service, but when the service was over, they hastily got up and walked as quickly as they could out of the service.

And a lady walked up to the pastor and said, you know, Pastor, those two women in the front row, they were a couple of prostitutes we met outside down the road and we talked them into coming to church for the first time here. And they never came back. And, you know, there probably is a time for confronting that kind of worldliness in the congregation, but I think that guy may not have hit the right time.

That's where walking in the spirit makes all the difference in the world. It's one thing to know that sometimes you should be strict and other times you should be kindly and more lenient. It's another thing to know when.

And that is where walking in the spirit comes in play. A teacher, a preacher, can't get up and say, OK, in situations X, Y, and Z, you do it this way and in situations A, B, and C, you do it this other way. But suffice it to know that Jesus reacted both ways to different situations.

And if you walk in the spirit of Jesus, these are fruits that the Holy Spirit will produce. In some cases, you will have to take an uncompromising stand. I mean, you always have to take an uncompromising stand, but you have to sometimes take a firm, severe, unyielding, inflexible stand with certain situations.

Other times, there is room for some flexibility. There's room for, you know, a special degree of grace in dealing with people. God, I think, in most cases, is the only one who knows when, and that's why you need to walk with God.

But we should be aware that both aspects of goodness, kindness and goodness, Paul lists, are among the fruits that the Spirit produces. Now, the absence of kindness is something none of us have ever really known entirely. A lot of people think that hell won't be such a bad place because all their friends are going to be there and they think they'll have a great time.

And especially if you told them, well, hell is nothing else but the absence of God. Many people say, oh, that doesn't sound so bad. Absence of God? I've hardly paid any attention to God anyway when He was here.

So, I mean, is that going to really be all that bad? To be excluded entirely from God in His universe? Well, I dare say that nobody has ever known the absence of God in His universe yet, except those who are in hell. And even those who make it a life goal to avoid God have never fully been able to escape Him. And not only in the uncountable

senses, but in the generous senses of God's mercy.

Jesus said that God causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. He causes the rain to come down on the farms and the fields of the wicked and of the righteous. That is to say, even people who don't acknowledge God, God is extending mercy to them on a regular basis.

He's kind to all. It says in Luke chapter 6, I'd like to turn your attention there, since I'm going to take the time to look it up anyway. Might as well let you take the time too.

Not that you have to. In Luke chapter 6, in verse 35, Jesus said, But love your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return. And your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the highest, for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. How is he merciful? He's kind even to the unthankful. He's kind even to the evil.

In other words, there has never been an evil person, however much they're committed to avoiding God, there's never been an evil person who has known nothing of the kindness of God, who has known nothing of the blessings of God's presence in his universe. You see, even the ability to see and enjoy color or light or music or beauty, every joy that we have is from God. It says in James, Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

Every good thing a person enjoys, Christian or not, is a gift from God. Now you separate someone from God altogether for all eternity, there's not even any light. That's why it's called outer darkness.

There's not any comfort. There's not any joy. There's not anything that even the most rank unbeliever, the most rebellious against God, has taken for granted.

And, you know, many times he thinks he's known the absence of God. God has never been absent from that person yet. And the kindness of God makes the world a tolerable place.

When you remove God from a place, and the only place in the universe where God isn't is hell, you remove God from that place and that's intolerable. And you can even get a little feeling for that if you can get a glimpse of places where God has not had as profound an influence as he has in the parts of the world that we were raised in. You know, there's some basic decency that permeates almost all of Western culture.

That's fading fast because knowledge of God is fading fast. But there's been, classically, historically, there's been tremendous influence of Christianity in the Bible in this part of the world. And all of us are pensioners on the kindness and generosity of heart and just

the Christian conscience that has been salt and light in the part of the world that all of us have spent most of our lives in.

If you go to a place where Christianity has not had an impact, you'd be amazed at how much cruelty, how little humanity, how little kindness and generosity and gentleness there often is. And things that we would say even the worst sinners we would not expect to do in our culture, we'd think they'd know better, are very common in other cultures. I've listed a few from various sources.

Just examples of how kindness is absent from places where Christianity has had no impact. And one thing I'm trying to show by these examples is that it's not only individually that God creates kindness through His Spirit's presence in your life, but a whole culture, a whole society is made more gentle, is made more kind by the presence of the Holy Spirit's activity among even a remnant within them where it provides a little leaven in the lump, salt to prevent decay or to change the direction of decay. Just to give you a little glimpse of what human nature is like in places where Christianity has had no influence.

There was a missionary doctor. He was a well-known eye surgeon. And he did his work in Quetta, a city in Pakistan, a Muslim country, of course.

His name was Sir Henry Holland. He was a specialist in eye surgery. He said that one of the things that really wrenched his heart in the Pakistan field that he was serving in was that from time to time, of course, patients would come for eye surgery whose eyes were so bad off that they were beyond help.

And he'd have to give them the news that there was nothing he could do for them. And he said that commonly, the most common thing was that when he would give them the news that there was nothing medical science could do for them, their eyes were hopelessly gone, he said the reaction of bystanders would be to roar with laughter upon hearing this news and to start jeering at the person and saying, Get out of here! Don't waste the doctor's time! I mean, I can't imagine that happening anywhere in any country I've ever lived in. I mean, even among the rankest heathen, because the rankest heathen have not been devoid entirely of the presence of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit in the parts of the world that I live in.

But you go to a place where the Gospels had no influence and kindness and gentleness and sensitivity is just, you know, it's not a part of their way of thinking. It's just total self-centeredness. Mary Schlessler, missionary to Calabar, Africa, she was grieved when she came there to find that because twins, having twins was considered to be an omen of ill fate, that the Africans would take twins when they were born and crush them and cast them to the leopards to eat because they thought that having twins was going to bring them some harm or something like that.

It was superstitious. But they had no compassion for these babies. And there have been many societies in history that had no compassion for babies.

Rome, in Biblical times, the Roman society, would commonly practice the exposure of infants for the purpose of killing them. There's a man named Hilarion who in 1 B.C. wrote a letter to his wife. He was away in Alexandria with the army.

And so he wrote a letter home and his wife was pregnant. And among other things in his letter he said, if, good luck to you, you bear a child, if it is a boy, let it live. If it's a girl, throw it out.

Another Roman writer named Stobius wrote, the poor man raises his sons, but the daughters, if one is poor, we expose. In other words, expose the element to die. They have no pity.

This was normal practice in Roman culture. Seneca wrote, Seneca was another Roman writer, he said, mad dogs we knock in the head, the fierce and savage ox we slay, sickly sheep we put to the night to keep them from infecting the flock, unnatural progeny, meaning human children, we destroy, we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal. Aristotle wrote, now he was not Roman, that was before the Roman Empire, this was in Greek Empire, Aristotle wrote, let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared.

Now, this was just commonplace in the Greek and the Roman Empire, which was pre-Christian. Before Christianity came, they thought of killing babies just because they were inconvenient. Some of you think that sounds pretty familiar now.

It is, as a matter of fact. You see, as we are in a post-Christian environment, the natural corruption and lack of kindness and lack of compassion that was in the pre-Christian world is beginning to emerge again in this society, which once was blessed with the knowledge of God, but has forsaken it. But it was commonplace where people just threw out a baby girl.

It was legal. Now, see, we can't quite do that in our society yet. They are getting closer all the time.

Now you can only kill them in the birth passage. You can't quite murder them in cold blood after they are out of the birth passage. But it is just a matter of time.

And I am sure unless there is a turning back to God, there will be this reversion back to the basic barbarism that is human nature. And it is manifested in lands where Christianity has never been, in ways that would shock us. And occasionally we hear about shocking cases in our own country.

You know, Jeffrey Dahmer shocked everybody. He was a cannibal and he was a

homosexual and he was a child molester and he was all these horrible things. I mean, he was one of the most horrendous people we can imagine, I suppose.

I think, how can a man be so evil? All you have to do is separate a man from the influence of God sufficiently. And men revert to that a lot. That was normal, civilized practice.

Cannibalism is normal, civilized practice in some groups that we wouldn't call civilized, but it was normal in societies of certain primitives. People we would call primitive, but they are tribal peoples. They didn't think anything wrong with it.

You may have heard of the story that is written up in the book, *Peace Child*, written by Don Richardson who was a missionary in Papua New Guinea. Or actually, in *Erie and Jaya*, the other part of that island. And he was a missionary among cannibals.

But before he got there with the gospel, that nation, that group of tribal groups that were all in the same general area, didn't, I mean, they knew there was such thing as good and bad, but they had all mixed up. They thought good was bad and bad was good. In their society, the highest virtue was regarded to be treachery.

To be kind was considered to be a fool. And when they first heard the gospel, they got it all mixed up. They thought Judas was the hero.

Because Judas betrayed Jesus. And they thought, in their society, that's the highest virtue is to betray someone to death. And in his book, *Peace Child*, Don Richardson describes some of their practices before the gospel came to them.

How that they'd fatten people with friendship, they called it. They called it fattening them with friendship. They'd profess friendship to someone from another tribe and they'd invite him over and kind of make friends and sit around and joke and chat with them and so forth.

Invite him over again, they'd feed him and become friends with the family and so forth. And after about five, six visits, they'd have him over and have him for lunch. And they'd actually just, you know, they'd be sitting around laughing and having a good time and then someone would pull out their spears and kill him.

And this was civilized as far as they were concerned. This is normal. This is human nature apart from the knowledge of God, apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit.

We haven't seen that too much yet in our society. And when we do see cases of it, we marvel. I mean, how could a man be so corrupt? Listen, all men are that corrupt without God.

And you say, well, I know a lot of people who aren't Christians who aren't that corrupt.

They're not without God entirely. That's just the point.

We have, very few of us have ever seen a person who's had no influence from God in their life because our society is just shot through with, you know, morals and ethics and so forth that have been borrowed from Christianity. But in societies where Christianity never has had any influence, it's not so. The Romans used to feel it was quite all right to kill your slave if they displeased you.

Juvenal, who is a Roman writer, he reports how a woman, a slave owner, who was being dressed by one of her maid servants, she was displeased because there was a curl in her hair that was not laying down the way it should and so she beat her slave with a whip. And Juvenal says, you know, there are masters of slaves who delight in the sound of cruel floggings thinking it is sweeter than the siren's song. The sound of flogging is sweeter than music to their ears.

Actually, there have been some in modern day Western world like that too. If you've watched some of those movies like Mutiny on the Bounty and you'll find that there have been cases even in modern times where some people seem to take delight in cruelty even though they've had some influence from Christianity. Okay, this is apparently not enough.

And he says there are people who are not happy until they've summoned a torturer and can brand someone with a red hot iron for stealing a couple of towels. That's what Juvenal said was the condition in his own day of slave owners. Another Roman writer speaking about slaves, Vadius Polio, he tells of a case and actually Pliny tells of this case.

Pliny in his book Natural History tells of this man Vadius Polio who cast his slave into a sea and threw him to the savage lampreys in the fish pool so he'd be torn up and eaten alive because he had stumbled and broken a goblet. Now this was legal in Rome. You could kill your slave if he displeased you but even if it was legal how many people would want to do that? The guy stumbles breaks a goblet so you throw him to the savage lampreys and let them eat him.

That's not exactly the kind of thing that most of us would consider even as non-Christians doing to a person. That kind of cruelty that kind of lack of humanity is something that we think even natural men would not do. But you know it takes the spirit of God to change people from that way and I think everyone in our society to a greater or lesser degree has had some influence from the spirit of God because the Holy Spirit speaks through Scripture the Holy Spirit convicts through the testimony of Christians who are light in their world and salt in the world and there's hardly anybody in our society who's had no exposure to the working of the spirit of God.

Of course only Christians have the spirit working within them but a society that has Christians in it should be seen well and does see an increase in kindness and generosity

and gentleness toward other people. You know the law didn't do that. The Jews did not have these Christian traits.

According to Romans chapter 3 in verse 12 a frequently quoted verse to prove that everyone's sinners in Romans 3, 12 Paul says there is none that doeth good and there is none. Actually the word good there doeth good is Christotes our word for kindness here literally what Paul says is there is none that does kindness. There is none that practices kindness. Now what many people don't realize is that Paul is quoting a Psalm there Psalm 14 which is about Jewish people it's not talking about the heathen it's not talking about the Romans or the Greeks or the Babylonians or the Assyrians it's talking about the wicked apostate ungodly Jews of David's day that his own countrymen the Jews he says there wasn't one among them practicing kindness Jewish society was not made kinder by the introduction of the law now if they had kept the law it would have been a kinder society but they didn't have the spirit of God and they were not in their hearts submissive to the law so the Jews though they had the law they didn't have kindness and we read in the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus told a story about a man who was beaten up by thugs and robbed and left half dead and two Jewish people Jewish leaders a Levite and a priest passed him by and didn't wait for him they were callous toward him now the rabbis taught that it is a sin to help a Gentile woman in childbirth even if she is in a crisis for her life in bearing a child and that it was also a sin to call for medical help for an apostate even if he was in a crisis and needed medical help it would be a sin to help him out according to the rabbis which explains maybe why the priest and the Levite in that story didn't help out the man who had fallen among thieves they assumed maybe he was a sinner under God's judgment or something but they didn't help him out but you know it's not just the ancient pagans it's not just the Jews who exhibit this kind of cruelty when the spirit of God is not active in their society but even apostate Christendom in the middle ages we have the inquisitions where persons who even profess to be Christian but who departed entirely from the spirit of Christ who departed entirely from the truth of the gospel they killed over 50 million people that didn't agree with them most of those people were people we'd call Christians the people who were doing the killing called themselves Christians it was of course the Roman Catholic Church under the papacy but the people they killed were Waldensians and Albigenes and there were different little groups that were trying to follow God according to their conscience not according to the Catholic ways and the inquisition was about killing these people and torturing them and you can still in some museums in Europe see the instruments of torture the racks and the thumb screws and the kinds of things and it is said that 50 million people were tortured and killed in the middle ages by these professing Christians what's that? 50 million 50 million not 15 million yeah I mean that of course that's over a period of a thousand years too I mean Hitler is considered to be one of the greatest monsters that's ever come up in modern history and he killed something like 6 million Jews it is said but the papacy who professed to be Christians Hitler didn't Hitler was an occultist we'd expect him to act like the devil but the papacy who professed to be the vicar of Christ

was doing the same kind of murderous horrible things too for a thousand years because there was no knowledge of God in the land there was a departure from the spirit of Christ and from the gospel and we see that even persons who had some light if they don't walk in the spirit of Christ the natural human nature comes back out and it's cruel you know when I read about things like what Hitler did or Stalin did or Mao Tse Tung did during the cultural revolution in China or things that still go on in Bosnia and places like that where there's civil wars and people just massacring whole villages I think how in the world could anyone perpetrate such things even if they're not a Christian you'd think that just basic human decency and just an acknowledgement of the golden rule do unto others as you'd have them do to you that alone would keep people from doing such atrocities but you know what I found out from studying history in the Bible there is no such thing as basic natural human decency it's not common or natural for man to be decent or to be charitable it is a work of grace in man whenever he shows anything like that it is the nature of man to care only about himself and to care nothing about others there are some of course who for selfish reasons care about the well-being of their families but the fact that that's not just philanthropic disinterested love is seen by the fact that they don't have quite the same concern about the neighbor's family and where you know objectively speaking the neighbor's family should be every bit as important as a man's own family not to him because he's got sentiments but even people can be cruel to their own children and to their own wives and we hear of child abuse all the time and wife abuse and stuff and the more so as our culture gets away from God because the presence of the knowledge of God the influence of the Holy Spirit even in a society to say nothing about in an individual's life increases the degree of kindness and decreases the amount of cruelty that is just taken for granted I was thinking about this even today or yesterday I don't remember what I was thinking how can anybody not see plainly the just common good sense of Jesus' statement in Matthew 7, 12 as you would admit that men would do to you do likewise unto them to me it seems so natural it seems so obvious I could never do a cruel act deliberately to anyone because I would so dislike having people do cruel things to me that I could never perpetrate that on someone else it's just against my nature but you see I've been raised a Christian and I take for granted it can't be taken for granted I got a flash as I was thinking about this today or yesterday I forget when of how I might think about that so called golden rule if I were not a Christian I thought well actually perhaps a person thinks why should I do to someone else what I have them do to me what do I care what their experience of life is what do I care about them I know what I want done to me and why I care about me but what rational argument can be given that I should care about somebody else why should I be sensitive why should I put myself in their shoes you know what I realize no rational argument can be given except maybe it's better for society in general or something like that for people to show kindness but really if you think about it if someone is just committed to resisting this thought I can think of no way to convince somebody that they ought to do to others as they would have done to themselves on a rational basis alone it takes a work of grace in the heart to see that that's the right thing to do and there's been so much grace



extended to our part of the world that the majority of the citizenry Christian or not had some conscience about such things not too awfully long ago in our history but it is as people are rejecting God rejecting the grace of God rejecting the spirit of God and His influence that we see the native human cruelty that existed universally throughout the world before Christianity came it's rearing its ugly head here again it's an amazing thing to me too how many people think society is going to be so much better when they eradicate this superstitious notion of Jesus and God and get Christianity out of here they think Christianity just divides people and it makes society makes a bunch of lunatic fanatics who go around bombing buildings and shooting abortion doctors and boy just get rid of those fundamentalists get rid of Christianity get rid of the Bible and we'll have a much more blissful new age but as a matter of fact these people have no idea what society would be like if they ever succeeded in their efforts to eradicate the knowledge of the gospel from society and these people especially the new agers who are the ones who are most adamant about wanting to get rid of Christianity I wish some of these people would just go on over to Calcutta just for vacation they don't have to move there just let them go for a weekend and let them see what a society that knows nothing about Jesus how much cruelty how much callousness how little love and compassion and kindness there is when Mother Teresa got there how many years ago? 50 or so I don't know how long ago she got there a long time ago the lepers in the street and the people who are suffering of all kinds of diseases were just laying there and people would pass by without giving them a thought it was a woman who was influenced by Christianity who came over there and had compassion for these people and wept for them and inconvenienced herself and risked her life to save them it was not the Hindus you know why? because Hinduism doesn't give you a motive for compassion Hinduism says well those people are suffering because they have bad karma from a previous lifetime and if they suffer enough now they'll get over the bad karma next reincarnation they can come back in a little better state but if you interfere with their bad karma if you give them comfort now well they'll have to pay off this bad karma next time they'll just come back the same way next time give them a break let them suffer leave them in their misery so that they can use up their bad karma and maybe next time around it'll be better you can see Christianity gives a motive for kindness but the lack of the knowledge of God and societies that totally lack it don't have any motivation for kindness and on the rare occasions that you might find genuine compassion and kindness among people who are Hindus and I'm not saying there aren't any Hindus who don't have such they are not acting consistently with their religion and there's a good chance that they've had some exposure to the grace of God even if they've never heard the gospel you know the grace of God the whole earth is filled with His glory there can be people who've never heard the gospel who've had some influence from God but without the influence of God human nature is just straight cruelty and therefore it is a work of the spirit a fruit of the spirit when kindness begins to develop and I've been talking in the last several minutes about the fruit of the spirit almost in a whole society but what is true in the macro is true in the micro of the human heart of the human individual human nature rules there too until the

Holy Spirit rules there but when the Holy Spirit comes to rule He produces His fruit there and the character of the Christian is to be characterized by kindness and there's many scriptures that tell us this we won't look at all of them right now I want to go on to however the remaining item that we have to cover tonight and that is what the New King James calls gentleness in the King James version it's called meekness it's number three on your notes there the Greek word there praotes or praotes or praotes and according to Arndt, Bauer and Gingrich the well respected lexicographers this Greek word means gentleness, humility, courtesy considerateness, meekness now as you can see some of those words overlap quite significantly with the words we've been talking about already especially the word kindness which is why although this word is translated gentleness in the New King James it's the other word that's translated kindness that the King James calls gentleness there's obviously a significant overlap here in the meaning of these words however gentleness or meekness and actually I prefer the word meekness for a particular reason it has a much more definable range of meaning of its own too now one reason I prefer the translation meekness to gentleness is because gentleness speaks of behavior only when you do something gently well let me put it this way you have to do something to do something gently gentleness speaks of a way of acting you act gently you don't just sit and be gentle but you can sit and be meek and act meekly also meekness has room for the idea of a disposition of the heart as well as the behavior where gentleness only speaks of a manner of behaving and the word does mean both and therefore I prefer the older the King James version when it translates it as meekness Jesus said blessed are the meek they shall inherit the earth and that's a concept Jesus just drew directly from the Old Testament because it says in Psalm 34 the meek shall inherit the earth or 37 and so meekness is how I'm going to translate this although the new King James calls it gentleness first of all we need to remember that every fruit of the spirit is something that is seen in Christ Christ is the model of meekness in fact there's two people in the Bible who are said specifically to be the models of meekness one is Moses who according to the book of Numbers was the meekest man who was on the face of the earth an epithet written by Moses himself as near as I can tell since he wrote the book of Numbers and then the other person who is remarkable for meekness is Jesus who also bore the same testimony about himself in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 29 Jesus said take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart the word gentle there is the word meek the same word praotes here Jesus said I am praotes Moses was praotes now apparently being meek doesn't mean you have to be so self-abnegating that you can't admit that you're meek if somebody says he's humble you usually have reason to suspect that he's not as humble as he says he is because people who are humble first of all often are not aware of it and because they're too humble to pay any attention to themselves and secondly if they're really humble they usually don't go around boasting about it because boasting is not an aspect of humility meekness however is not inconsistent with self-acknowledgement of its presence if you are meek that's an objective reality and we need to talk about what it is because the Bible says more about meekness than it does about these other two items we've been talking

about the word that's translated goodness here is only found a handful of times in the Bible and the word that's kindness is found a little more often but meekness is a concept that's there throughout the scriptures Old and New Testament and it's a principle one of the beatitudes is devoted to this subject and it's a major fruit of the spirit I gave you some scriptures you can look up I'm not going to look them up now because we're going to talk about the meaning of the word now Praeotes the word meekness or gentleness I've given several definitions some of them from secular Greek because after all the Greek language in the Bible was a secular language the words that Paul used were words that already had meaning in secular society and this word Praeotes actually is one that Aristotle talked a great deal about in his books on ethics and in fact three different books Aristotle defined or described the man who had this quality and of course this was before the time of Paul so what Aristotle had done toward defining that word was made, it entered into the whole definition of the word when Paul began to choose his words and he would have known that this was what the word meant and he would have picked his words accordingly Aristotle said that Praeotes is the mean in relation to anger now what does that mean? well the mean means the the happy medium that which is in the middle between two extremes what Aristotle did is he defined character traits in terms of two extremes having too much of something and too little of something and virtue lay right in the middle of having neither too much nor too little of a thing so to have concern for your well-being for example you can have too much of that so that you're a coward and you take no risks or you can have too little of that and you'd be reckless but right in the middle somewhere is courage where you have not too much concern about your own safety but you have sufficient you have neither too much nor too little that's how Aristotle defined character traits with reference to some situation where you can either have too much or too little but the golden mean the happy medium between two extremes is where virtue lay as far as Aristotle was concerned well with reference to anger he said priotes is mean with reference to anger it means having neither too much nor too little anger now we talked last week about long suffering and I also related it to anger but not as directly as I intend to with meekness if you're a patient person you don't get angry real quickly you may still get angry but you don't get angry as quickly if you're patient a meek person would not get angry at all when it's inappropriate he's not only patient and slow to wrath he won't get angry at all if it's not an appropriate anger now Paul said in Ephesians 4 be angry and sin not there is some anger that is not sin Jesus is said to have been angry at least once in the New Testament and his behavior is described as if he were angry in more than one place in the New Testament and Jesus did seem to exhibit anger we know that God has anger the Bible says so if God has anger there's no sin in it because God doesn't sin and therefore there is an anger that is not sin but there is clearly an anger that is sin and generally speaking sinful anger is that which is self-interested if your anger is sinful it's because you are self-interested you are usually angry at somebody who has wronged you has slighted you has irritated you they've got on your nerves and therefore you get irritable and angry that is sinful that is the absence of meekness that is too much anger of the wrong kind on the other hand

there is a place for getting angry and both Jesus and Paul and David and other men and Moses who were meek did get angry at times at the same kinds of things God was angry at in these cases they were not angry for their own well-being they were angry for others the one time in the New Testament that says that Jesus got angry which is in Mark chapter 3 He was not angry at anyone who was hurting Him He was angry because He was about to heal an afflicted man and the Pharisees by their legalism were going to try to restrict Him from doing so and it says He looked on them with anger being grieved by the hardness of their hearts Jesus was angry at them not because of anything they were doing to Him but because they were not going to let Him heal this man who had a need now if Jesus gave in to these people Jesus would not be hurt any by it but this man would go away still crippled and Jesus was angry that these people would have such callousness such hardness of heart toward others that made Him mad when Jesus cleansed the temple those that He drove out of the temple with a whip were not people who had attacked Him or even criticized Him in fact most of them didn't even know He existed the first time He did it He came out of obscurity with a whip and drove them out but what was He angry about? because they had turned God's house into a den of thieves they were offending God and Jesus took up God's offense there are times when it's appropriate you should be angry when you hear about child abuse you should be angry when you hear about genocide you should be angry at some of those things because God's angry at it the Bible says in Psalms that God is angry with the wicked everyday and there's a place for righteous anger and there's also a much more common among human beings sinful anger I dare say that some people have never been righteously angry even though they get angry easily meekness would be the golden mean the happy medium between too little anger where you never get angry even when you should and too much anger where you get angry when you shouldn't now Aristotle went on to give further definition to the word priotes or meekness he said the man who is meek is neither too hasty nor too slow-tempered he says to priotes this word belongs the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation and not to embark on revenge quickly now of course he's secular Aristotle is not a Christian he was before Christ came and he said not to embark on revenge too quickly but Jesus would say don't avenge yourself at all but then Jesus had a whole different world view than Aristotle and added to the word meekness things that Aristotle would not have included but even among the pagans priotes meekness was defined as the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation and not to embark on revenge quickly not to be easily provoked to anger but to be free from bitterness and contentiousness having tranquility and stability in the spirit that almost sounds like a Christian statement that was coming from a pagan philosopher who was telling what that particular Greek word meant and what was in its range of meaning not being easily provoked to anger but to be free from all bitterness and contentiousness having tranquility and stability in spirit there's a Latin word that's the equivalent of priotes the Greek word priotes and this word is mitos probably not I never studied Latin so I'm probably not pronouncing it correctly but in Latin literature this word which also means meekness is applied to a horse that's been broken or a

sheep dog that's been trained so that it obeys every command of its master instantly obviously a broken horse or a trained dog is not a weak creature we sometimes assign to the word meekness sort of a milk toast kind of a character you know I mean somebody who really doesn't have any spine doesn't have any backbone just kind of a jellyfish kind of a person and we think of meekness therefore as something akin to weakness but the word when applied to a horse that's been broken or a dog that's been trained doesn't speak of weakness it speaks of strength that's under control it's you know it doesn't take great strength to get angry easily it doesn't take great strength to fly off the handle and have a short fuse it takes great strength to control oneself and it is a greater strength than that of you know vindicating yourself forcibly or whatever and the book of Proverbs tells us that I'd like to turn your attention to Proverbs 16 and here we have a description of meekness of course the word meekness is not used but this idea of having strength under control like a broken horse or a trained dog in Proverbs 16 in verse 32 Proverbs 16, 32 it says he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city the mighty man who can take a city may seem to be a strong man but the man who rules his spirit is stronger the man who is slow to anger is greater to be a great warrior takes strength to hold back your anger and rule your spirit takes more yes, Ted that's Proverbs 25, 28 right Proverbs 25, 28 also talks about ruling your spirit it says he that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that's broken down without walls right that twice it refers to the concept of ruling your spirit the idea of if your spirit is hasty to wrath you don't have any rule over it it has rule over you the strength of meekness is that you cannot be easily provoked by outside parties now some of you have not heard this as much as others depends on how many years you've been around but I have a favorite theme that I sometimes teach about and there's a lesson we have on tape that I give on other occasions called refuse to be offended and I've had actually some Christians tell me you can't refuse to be offended they've said I have to be offended well, it depends on what you mean by offended obviously some things are offensive and appropriately we should be offended if someone's blaspheming God that should offend us if somebody's beating his wife that should offend us but what I'm talking about refusing to be offended is refuse to be provoked by those who are seeking to provoke you those who are seeking to offend you or offenses and slights that might come your way that are not related to somebody else's well-being but your own where somebody is intruding into your space they are impairing your happiness and as I like to point out that if somebody does something offensive to you there's two possibilities either they're trying to offend you or they're not trying to offend you if they're not trying to offend you then there's no reason to get offended I mean, people sometimes do say insensitive things or they overlook you they forget you they forget your name or they forget a promise they made and it doesn't happen but if you can say well, they probably didn't mean any harm by it or maybe they just forgot or they just were not paying attention they were careless I won't be offended because they probably meant nothing by it that is a position you should be able to take even a person of moderate generosity and meekness should be able to say well, you know if they didn't mean any harm by it

there's no reason I should be offended but the other possibility is what they did they did intend to offend you some people try to offend you but I say you don't have to be offended even then if they're not trying to offend you you shouldn't be offended if they are trying to you still don't need to be you don't have to why let them control your spirit? why let any outward circumstance rule your spirit? he that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls if you don't rule your own spirit someone else will if somebody can get your gut if someone can provoke you if somebody can make you get angry that person is ruling your spirit you're not that person is determining your moral climate in your heart not you there was a quote actually he scrawled on the bathroom wall in the McMinnville Public Library I forget who said it I thought I'd never forget oh, it was Will Rogers a quote from Will Rogers you know, he was the old comedian philosopher in this, what was it, a generation ago he said and I don't know if I can quote him now it's been a while since I've said it he said something like I am at the mercy of any man who can make me lose my temper and that's kind of what I'm saying that if somebody can get your goat then you don't have your goat you don't have rule over your own spirit if somebody else rules it for you and a meek person is strong enough to control his own spirit he is slow to anger and that makes him greater than the man who can take a city greater than the mighty according to scripture in Proverbs 19 and verse 11 Proverbs 19, 11 says the discretion and that means wisdom the discretion of a man makes him slow to anger and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression in this case it means a transgression against himself it is to the glory of a wise man that he can overlook it he doesn't have to get irritated when someone does something wrong to him that's his discretion makes him slow to anger this is what meekness is that's what the word meant when Paul chose it to speak of it now the Christian then has got to maintain control over his tendency to get angry to get provoked Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, 5 love is not provoked in fact last week we talked about long suffering tonight we're talking about kindness and so forth but Paul said in the same passage 1 Corinthians 13 says love is long suffering and kind it's one thing to suffer long it's another thing to suffer long and still be kind some people may suffer long against their will and many of them are provoked by the suffering that they endure but to suffer long and still be kind requires grace, it requires the spirit of God this is a trait of Christ that has to be worked supernaturally in the life of the believer because it's not natural now there are some people who seem naturally meek and they seem naturally, you know, good natured a lot of these people though are just apathetic or cowardly I mean there is, again, this balance there is a time to get angry there's a time to refrain from anger biblically Jesus knew when to be angry, he knew when not to be angry God knows when to be angry, he knows when not to be angry and certainly godly men, David, Moses, Paul all had their moments where they were angry and it was, I believe in most cases, not sinful Moses on one occasion sinfully got angry and lost his right to go to the promised land over it so even godly men sometimes don't guess right when it's right to be angry but the fact is that meekness to walk in meekness is to walk in the the happy medium between being angry in the wrong times and not being angry at the right times but to be slow to anger

not easily provoked free from bitterness and contentiousness having tranquility and stability in the spirit W.E. Vine who wrote the Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words he said about this word *prōtis*, meekness he said it must be clearly understood therefore that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power it is the fruit of the spirit and the spirit is the source of power in our lives but it requires the power of the spirit to produce the controlled self-controlled spirit which is required by what we call meekness now I'm going to close in a few minutes but what I want to do is talk real quickly about what is the basis and the root and the foundation of having this kind of spirit, this kind of meekness of spirit and there are three things that need to be considered very briefly one is one's attitude toward God or his thinking about God another is his thinking about other people and the third is his thinking about himself in order to have kindness, goodness gentleness or meekness these things Paul is talking about these things grow out of prior attitudes that are chosen these things don't just kind of come on their own they are the fruit of seeds that are sown they are the fruit of roots that are under the surface in the believer's life and those roots are a Christian's presuppositions how he thinks about God how he thinks about others how he thinks about himself these things permeate all of his thinking about things a lot of times he's not even aware of these below the surface root attitudes but it's from these proper attitudes spring these fruits above the surface in the character first let me just say with reference to one's attitude toward God the scholar Trench was writing about meekness and he said it's an inwrought grace of the soul and the exercises of it are first and chiefly toward God it is that temper of spirit in which we accept his dealings with us as good and therefore without disputing or resisting in other words we accept what God sends our way and we don't dispute with God about it we are resigned to God this came up last time when we were talking about long suffering that's at the root of being long suffering also being able to bear with things that are unpleasant with an undisturbed spirit that comes of being able to resign yourself to the sovereign providence of God in your life being able to accept all God's dealings in your life as good because they are from him and God has only good in mind for you now the good that he has in mind might be painful I have only good in mind for my children but when I discipline them that is not an interruption in my well-wishing for them that is a manifestation of it the Bible says that he that spares the rod hates his son so obviously to discipline a child is a manifestation of concern of well-wishing it's hateful, it's hurtful to a child to never train them to never direct their life with discipline discipline is not pleasant at the time and the Bible says that in Hebrews chapter 12 no chastening at the time seems pleasant but grievous but afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it it says in Hebrews 12, 10 and 11 so the dealings of God in our lives are sometimes not what we would choose they are sometimes painful, uncomfortable it requires not only God's providences but his denials where he does not give us what we want or where he gives us what we do not want but meekness is able to thrive in an environment of the heart which is already surrendered to God already trusts God that he will always do only good things hurtful or painful things

at times but never hurtful ultimately that even the painful things are for my good that God works all things together for good to those who love him and if a person really believes that faith in God's ultimate goodness an unshakable faith in that makes it possible to embrace all of his dealings and even those painful things that come through other people we can embrace them meekly without getting angry we can resign ourselves to it and so this basic prior attitude about God is present when biblical meekness is being experienced as far as attitude toward others in Paul's writings he associates meekness in Ephesians 4, 2 he associates it with long suffering and in Colossians 3, 12 he associates it with compassion now long suffering and compassion have to do with our attitude toward other people we bear long with them why do we do that? well, because we want them to bear long with us what we want others to do to us is what we do toward them Jesus said we have compassion on them that means that we care about people when we view people who are even irritating to us or who would be attempting to provoke us rather than see them as the evil scumbags that maybe they rightfully are in a sense it might be correct to see them that way we can also see them we realize that there but for the grace of God go we I mean if that person is a scumbag and if I'm not quite as much of a scumbag that's just because I've had more mercy than they've had and therefore I see them in some respects as deprived of the degree of mercy that I have benefited from in my life that is not to my credit that I've benefited from mercy and it's not always to their detriment that they have not now I am not favorable toward the common victim mentality that is promoted in both psychology and in the modern church where every sin is blamed on someone else I'm a victim of this abuse I'm a victim of this lack of proper upbringing I mean I'm a victim of circumstances on the other hand I don't want to overreact to it all human beings are victims to a certain extent of the enemy I mean I don't want to redefine bad behavior as sickness and every person who has been badly as a victim of some mental illness but at the same time we need to acknowledge the Bible does represent sinners as persons who are in one sense victims they are prisoners they've been overcome they've been captured and Paul says this for example in 2 Timothy chapter 2 in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 24 through 26 Paul says a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle that is meek with all men able to teach patient it's like long suffering in humility correcting those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil having been taken captive by him to do his will this is how Paul views those who oppose you they are in need to be granted repentance by God they have not yet been so granted repentance so that they might know the truth they don't know the truth they are victims of ignorance to a certain extent that they may come into their senses they are a little bit out of their mind they need to come to their senses they need to come back to rational thinking they need to escape the snare of the devil they've been trapped and it says they've been taken captive by him to do his will now to a certain extent it is proper to view those who oppose you those who would irritate you as victims they are not victims in the sense that they are not responsible they are not victims in the sense that they are



not making I mean, every one of them is making choices that are worse than what they could make and for that they are responsible but they are also experiencing a measure of bondage they are experiencing a measure of blindness and darkness they are a little bit out of their mind because that's the natural state of fallen man and as such there is a place for being merciful and patient with such people and realizing that the only reason you are not quite as bad if you're not is because the grace of God has come to you in greater measure than it has come to them up to this point therefore, he says, you don't quarrel but you're gentle you're patient apt to teach you're humble long-suffering with these people and it is your attitude toward people seeing them as persons in need of deliverance from the bondage of sin that makes it possible to put up with abuse from them Jesus did look at what they did to Jesus and when he was suffering the greatest abuse of all and the Christ said, Father, forgive them they don't know what they're doing now they knew somewhat what they were doing they knew they weren't doing a good thing every one of those involved knew that Jesus was an innocent man they knew they were not doing a good thing but they didn't realize how bad it was Jesus didn't look at entirely just their culpability he looked also at the disadvantage they had they didn't fully understand what they were doing now maybe they would have still done it if they did but Jesus saw them partially at least in measure, victims of blindness and darkness and that's a proper way to see those who oppose you and who hurt you and that's why Jesus forgave them rather than getting angry at them interesting, Jesus got angry when people hurt other people but when they killed him, he could forgive them he was not angry at them Jesus was meek his anger was definitely under control and he did not vent it at inappropriate times or in inappropriate situations but the reason he was able to is because he could view people as the fallen victims of the devil that we all surely are to some degree but there is a balance in the Bible between being a victim of the enemy and also being responsible for our own actions because every person who would can be free from that victimization if a person remains a victim of Satan it's because they are not loving the truth that's a choice they're making and they are not reading the scriptures and turning to Christ and repenting of their sin which I believe is a choice they can make, frankly and so there is a sense in which they are responsible for their actions and rightly will be judged if they don't repent but at the same time we realize that we were that way once too and there's a place for showing some compassion and mercy and that's another aspect of our Christian thinking that makes us meek our thinking toward God that we trust him that all his dealings in our life are for our good toward people that there is a sense in which they are to be pitied and they need help and they are not the enemy they are victims of the same enemy of ours the devil is our enemy we don't wrestle against flesh and blood we wrestle against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age and so do they the only thing is they lost they're pinned they're captives they're not the enemy and therefore when they treat us badly we don't have to be angry at them we don't have to be provoked we can say well they need the grace of God like I do apparently they apparently aren't enjoying as much of it as I am finally meekness grows out of a prior proper attitude towards self right thinking

about God about others and about myself is the soil and the root from which the fruit of kindness and goodness and gentleness or meekness spring what is the right attitude towards self is it self love self esteem self worth not according to scripture it's more self forgetfulness that is to forget about you don't think about yourself you'll be happier it's a lot harder to get irritated when you don't care about yourself it's very easy to get irritated and provoked when you are thinking about yourself this is the whole issue with the Christian life is to learn to deny yourself and take up your cross to be able to die to self W.E.Vine in talking about meekness in his expository dictionary of New Testament words described negatively meekness is the opposite to self assertiveness and self interest it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down simply because it's not occupied with self at all unquote it's not overly responsive to irritations or to you know flattery or whatever because self is just not in the focus there it's not in the viewfinder self is out of the picture now you might say well that sounds very idealistic how could anyone ever be at the state of mind where self is out of the picture well it's the ideal it's the goal it's something we wrestle with all the time because self is always with us and always asserts it's claims but it is possible to continually renounce self to continually say well okay I don't like the fact that that person just spit in my face but who am I who am I to have you know to insist that people don't spit in my face you know I mean what right do I have to better treatment than this those questions have very humbling answers the fact is I'm nobody I have no right to escape such treatment as a matter of fact I deserve far worse if I rightly understand the magnitude of my sins I deserve far worse than anything I'll ever receive at the hands of men or from God as a matter of fact because of the mercy of God my view of myself of my rights and how I ought to be treated is one of those things which if right will keep me meek and slow to wrath slow to be provoked but if wrong will make me touchy thin skinned and easily provoked so kindness and goodness and meekness are really kind of the result of the spirits working into me a prior set of convictions about God that all of his dealings are good for me about people that all of them need grace just as much as I do and without it I would be no better than they and thirdly about myself that I really don't matter so all far much I've lived all my life convincing myself that I matter and as a Christian I need to be renewed in my mind to realize I don't matter that much I'm not that important I'm expendable that doesn't mean that God can't do something significant with me but it means that if he does it's him that provided all the significance we have this treasure in earthen vessels Paul says we're the earthen vessels made of a jar of clay worth nothing in itself there's a treasure in it and that makes it there's potential for that jar of clay but it's just a jar of clay still and if there's anything valuable it's not in the jar it's in what the jar contains and that is the proper use of self and as long as I just see myself as a clay pot I'm not going to go around flattering myself that I deserve to be treated well by people or honored by people or esteemed by people or even by myself I can have the blissful attitude of forgetting that I even ever thought that I had rights and just go about the business of seeing that God gets what he deserves out of me and out of my responses and that's of course the Christian attitude that is what produces the ability to

be kind and good and merciful and gentle and meek these things are the fruit of the spirit but only I think because these prior attitudes are the production of the spirit you can't really have a death to self unless the Holy Spirit works it in you you can't do that in your flesh by nature your strongest instinct is self preservation the only way you could ever die to self is by a work of grace a work of the spirit in your life but fortunately such is available and you can and these attitudes then are the basic foundational Christian attitudes and from them grow fruitful spiritual fruit of behavior well that's all we're going to take the time for tonight it's not very often that I quit when there's still five minutes left on the tape but we're going to do it anyway so if you want to stop that there could be great and we'll if you have any questions we can take them at this time