

Text: Gal. 5:22; Luke 7:36-50

Title: "The fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ -
gentleness"

Time: 9/8/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: One of the wonderful joys of serving the Lord as a pastor of one of His local churches is that you often are privileged to see how the church is the beneficiary of various acts of kindness from God's people. I shared at our prayer gathering Thursday evening that I received in the mail this past week a generous gift for our church from a young lady who no longer attends here, but who felt that the money she had earned on the Lord's Day ought to go to the Lord's work. As members of this church, we are often recipients of kindnesses we do not even know about.

The gift we received included a two-page letter of appreciation for the way our ministry blessed this young lady during her childhood. Those words were kind words, and they did as much to encourage me as did the generosity of her gift.

We have come to a fruit of the Spirit in our study that is a kind word - *gentleness* (KJV). It is the word Paul uses in the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, when he writes that love is kind (v. 4). There kindness follows longsuffering as it does here. Two weeks ago, we noted that longsuffering is the quality of being patient with people who are difficult to endure. Whereas the endurance of longsuffering towards people is somewhat passive, kindness takes the love a step further to an active care for people - like the gift we received last week. This morning we will call this fruit of the Spirit *gentle kindness*.

In our Galatians context, Paul tells us that gentle kindness is one of the fruits we need to look for to understand whether we are walking in the Spirit. We have an amazing opportunity to have incredible power over our sinful flesh – “Walk in the Spirit and you shall in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” This means being controlled by God’s truth – His word, and it means confession of sin when we fail. It also means self-examination – understanding what it means to live a life of gentle kindness and honestly assessing whether that describes our life.

For help with that self-examination we have been examining the life of Christ. *Christ* means *Anointed One*, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and He walked in the Spirit in such a way that He bore perfectly the fruit of the Spirit in His life, including gentle kindness. Luke 7 gives us merely one example of many such episodes of this gentle kindness. Notice from that passage three things with me about Jesus’s fruit of the Spirit – gentle kindness.

I. The gentle kindness of Christ is His willingness to be touched (vv. 36-39).

Illustration: My wife and I have noticed more than the usual number of grasshoppers around the parsonage this year for some reason. It is not quite like the plague of Egypt yet, but we have noticed some hopping around in our house in a way that we have not noticed before. When Maureen sees one, she tells me about it rather than trying to touch it herself, although the last one she did deal with in a great way. Sometimes we are squeamish about touching certain creatures. For my wife, the grasshopper is on that list.

Application: This “woman in the city, who was a sinner” was on the list that the Pharisees had of things that made

them especially squeamish (v. 39). Luke's description of these men tells us some things they would not have wanted us to know about them.

First, they keep their thoughts about this to themselves ("they spake within themselves"). Somethings should not be said out loud, for sure, but those are usually also the things that should not be thought internally. If it is good to hold our tongue, it is probably also good to change our thinking.

Next, they misunderstand who the woman is. They were correct that she was the kind of woman who is a sinner, but they thought that she was in a category that did not belong to them. Their attitude is very different from the centurion described earlier in the chapter, who understood that he was not worthy for Jesus to enter his house (vv. 1-9). The centurion could say, "I am not worthy." Simon could only say, "This woman is not worthy."

Finally, and most tragically, they misunderstand who Jesus is: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known [what I have known]." They misjudge Jesus as a mere man, as not quite a prophet, and as the one who does not know as much as they know. This is great sin – to fail to see that Jesus knows far more than you know. Here again, the centurion did better. He told Jesus, "say in a word, and my servant shall be healed" (v. 7). Have we remembered that Jesus knows what we do not know? Have we remembered that He is in control of the situation we face? Have we remembered that He can and must say in a word for us to be healed? Do we trust Him or ourselves this morning?

Application2: Of course, this woman of the street trusts in Christ. She repents of her sin and trusts the One who came

to seek and to save those who are lost. Jesus was kind to her with a kindness that was willing to have His life interrupted and touched by her.

Whom have we been kind to in this way? Whom have we allowed to become a part of our lives that we might seek and save those who are lost? If we walk in the Spirit, we will bear this fruit of gentle kindness that is willing to be touched by sinners. Our flesh will make us like Simon.

II. The gentle kindness of Christ is His willingness to forgive (vv. 40-49).

Illustration: Thursday evening our church prayed for those in the Carolinas threatened by Hurricane Dorian. Friday morning, I received a text from my sister in Fayetteville, NC that all was well, there was no flooding, and that they were enjoying a beautiful day. I texted back a verse that we had read that evening together (Ps. 109:27, "That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it").

Application: I believe the Lord answered our prayers for my sister's community Thursday night because of something the Bible teaches us about His kindness (Luke 6:35). There were a lot of evil and unthankful people in Fayetteville enjoying a beautiful day last Friday morning, and they were doing so as recipients of God's kindness. So this kindness is not something that waits for people to earn it and be thankful for it. It is an act of forgiving grace.

One detail of our passage this morning that is easy to miss is that Jesus does not speak of those who are not forgiven. He speaks of those who understand that they are forgiven much and those who think that they need to be forgiven very little, but the implication here is that everyone has

been forgiven very much indeed. No one is unforgiven or truly forgiven only a little.

Every time God gives us another beautiful day though we are evil and unthankful, His kindness to us requires that He forgives us. This is why God's plan of forgiveness for sinners is called His kindness (Tit. 3:4-7, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.").

The kindness that forgives, that saves us, and that characterizes our Lord is a kindness that is supposed to be a constant part of our treatment of one another as a local church (Eph. 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."). Honestly, every time a brother or sister in Christ does not come to an assembly time, I have to remember this responsibility. I must remember how sinful I am and how much I have been forgiven and how the Lord expects me to forgive like He forgives, even if someone is unthankful or evil toward me. How can this be done meeting time after meeting time? God's promise: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh." How has this fruit of forgiving kindness been developing in your life?

III. The gentle kindness of Christ is His willingness to share His yoke (v. 50).

Illustration: Misguided attempts have been made to identify this woman. You may have read of some of those in the

last town paper. Alfred Edersheim was a Jew who had converted to Christianity through the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland. His studies in Rabbinic school were especially useful to his best-known work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1886). I appreciate what Edersheim had to say in that work about these ill-conceived interpretations of this passage: “We understand the infinite delicacy that left her unnamed, the record of whose ‘much forgiveness’ and great love had to be joined to that of her much sin. And we mark, in contrast, the coarse clumsiness which, without any reason for the assertion, to meet the cravings of morbid curiosity, or for saint-worship, has associated her history with the name of Mary Magdalene” (1.563).

Application: It is pretty clear from Luke 8:2 that Luke did not think this lady was Mary Magdalene, and attempts to identify her as such or to identify her with Mary of Bethany are indeed based on denials of the infallibility of Scripture, as known for centuries by men like Edersheim.

But Edersheim does point out an interesting parallel to this passage from the Gospel of Matthew. He mentions that this point in the timeline of Jesus’s ministry likely coincided with the time in Matthew 11, where Jesus’s preaching contained a very specific invitation (vv. 25-30).

We do not know this lady’s name, but what we do know is that in childlike faith she heard Jesus say something like, “Come unto me,” and she came. When Jesus said my yoke is *easy*, He uses our word for gentle kindness. Having come to Jesus, not worrying about what others might think or say, she found salvation, and peace, and Jesus’s yoke of gentle kindness. The gentle kindness of Christ is His willingness to share His yoke with us. He tells this new believer – “Go in peace,” for He would go with her.

How can we fear the yoke of the Lord when it is so very kind? How can we be troubled by a burden so very light? What makes it easy and light? Not the lack of suffering or trouble, but the mighty promise of the Spirit's power – "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

The yoke of Christ is kind because it comes with the Holy Spirit's power. Have you taken up that yoke? Are you walking with Him and plowing the furrow He is plowing? Only then can we truly go in peace. It was her faith that saved this woman, but taking up Jesus's yoke of gentle kindness would be how she could enjoy that future that Jesus commands her to enjoy as a new believer: "Go in peace."

Conclusion: In his comments on this passage, Edersheim wrote: "There are times when we forget all else in one absorbing thought; when men's opinions – nay, our own feelings of shame – are effaced by that one Presence; when the 'Come to Me; learn of Me; I will give you rest,' are the all in all to us" (1.565; emphasis original).

As we examine our own lives honestly in the light of Jesus's example, do we see His gentle kindness in us? How badly do we want to learn of Him in this regard? Do we want to allow our lives to be touched by those in need? Do we want to be constant in forgiveness? Do we want to carry Jesus's kind yoke with Him and for Him? Will we learn from Him what our need for gentle kindness is this morning?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching