

The Gentleness of Christ

"The gentleness of Christ." – 2 Corinthians 10:1

Summary:

Christ's gentleness is both the pattern he displayed and the spirit he forms in his people. Prophecy, miracle, invitation, friendship, suffering, and present ministry all reveal a Saviour who is approachable, patient, tender, and kind. His gentleness never excuses hypocrisy or abandons righteousness; it joins mercy with wisdom, truth, and dignity. Christ still shows this gentleness by relieving our needs, patiently teaching us, measuring our discipline, and fitting every task to the strength he supplies. Believers should therefore trust him without slavish fear, admire him, and follow him until they increasingly bear his likeness.

Outline:

1. Christ's gentleness is shared with his people

- The mind and Spirit seen perfectly in Christ must also mark everyone who belongs to him.

2. Prophecy and ministry reveal a gentle Saviour

- The promised King comes in lowliness, tends the weak, and uses his power chiefly in kindness and restoration.

3. Gentleness does not compromise righteousness

- Christ's rebukes of hypocrisy show that mercy, meekness, wisdom, justice, and moral courage belong together.

4. Christ is gentle toward the vulnerable, friends, and enemies

- He welcomes the burdened and children, weeps with friends, cares for his mother, bears with disciples, and prays for persecutors.

5. Christ continues to deal gently with believers

- He relieves, teaches, disciplines, and employs his people with patience, calling them to confidence, admiration, and imitation.

Text

Does the apostle mean by “the gentleness of Christ” the gentleness he requires or the gentleness he displayed? In fact, they are the same—not in degree, but in quality. As the precious ointment poured on Aaron’s head ran down to his garments’ skirts, so Christians receive an unction from the Holy One. Christ’s mind is in them; indeed, this unity is essential: “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Let us therefore consider this gentleness as Christ personally exemplified it.

According to earlier prophecies, few qualities would distinguish him more clearly: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee—having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass—and he shall speak peace unto the heathen.” “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”

He would tend his flock like a shepherd: gathering lambs, carrying them close, and gently leading those with young. He would descend like rain on mown grass, watering the earth. He would spare the poor and needy and save their souls. When prophecy becomes history and we see him doing good, this beautiful distinction appears repeatedly and clearly.

What was his emblem? A Lamb. How did the Holy Spirit descend upon him? In the form of a dove. What was the angelic report of his religion? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.” How did he use the supernatural powers entrusted to him? He once cursed a fig tree, and it immediately withered. But it was a barren, unowned tree growing by the wayside—not a person. The act served as an instructive emblem and warning.

It is also true that he destroyed the Gadarenes’ herd of swine. Yet this animal sacrifice was made out of love for their souls: it brought their sin to remembrance and rebuked an unlawful trade. What was the loss of their swine compared with the benefit of restoring two of their neighbours and relatives from a wretched condition to reason, enjoyment, and usefulness?

His other miracles were acts of kindness: he fed the hungry multitude, restored sight to a blind beggar, and raised a widow’s only son. At Cana in Galilee, he even turned water into wine to preserve the celebration, spare the newlyweds embarrassment, and honor them.

It is true that he repeatedly exclaimed, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” But they were hypocrites of

the vilest kind: outwardly devout, yet full of extortion and iniquity. They sinned against knowledge, attributed miracles they believed were from the devil, and used devotion to serve their depravity. Through long public prayers, they devoured widows' houses.

Observe him in relation to others. He was neither censorious nor distant, but approachable, charitable in judgment, mild in rebuke, and tender in invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

To the transgressor whom accusers wished to stone, though guilty of the same crime, he said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." When his disciples rebuked those bringing young children to Jesus, he was displeased and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." He embraced them, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Consider his conduct toward his friends. At Lazarus's grave, "Jesus wept." Even in death, he cared for his mother, entrusting her to the disciple he loved. He dealt gently with his disciples, bearing their mistakes, excusing their weaknesses, loving them to the end, and blessing them as he ascended into heaven.

Nor was he lacking this compassion toward his enemies. He wept over the city whose people sought his blood and healed the servant of his bitterest foe. When men came to arrest him, he could have destroyed them but merely made them retreat and fall, allowing his followers to escape. As he suffered, he darkened the sun, shook the earth, and split the rocks, yet punished no one. Instead, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

He has the same heart now. Though he has entered heaven, he is touched by our infirmities. His gentleness appears in four ways. **First, he relieves our needs.** Many are treated harshly when seeking help from others; even when successful, they may receive relief without grace. There is a great difference between bounty and kindness—between giving and benevolence.

Tender, delicate service is often especially seen among women, in ways men rarely equal. Angels would be the same if embodied among us: how gentle their kindness! Even now, they bear us up so softly that we scarcely notice, lest we dash our foot against a stone. How much more does the Lord of all bend down to hear every distress, give generously, and never reproach us for asking?

Second, his gentleness is evident in teaching us. Teachers need not only ability but also patience and self-control.

Without gentleness, a weak pupil may become confused or despair. Who bears with learners as Christ, the great Teacher, bears with us? He patiently endures our dullness and mistakes, using many methods and repeating his lessons year after year, line upon line, and precept upon precept.

Third, his gentleness appears in chastising us. He corrects us moderately and restrains the rough wind during the east wind. "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

Fourth, his gentleness appears in how he employs us. He imposes no burden beyond the strength he provides and spares his servants as a man spares his son. Christ knows both the work he assigns and the weakness of those entrusted with it.

Let us not take advantage of his gentleness. Nothing could be more vile, hateful, or provoking. Instead, let us cultivate it by setting aside dread and slavish fear in our dealings with him, trusting in him, admiring him, and following him—until, by the Spirit of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 15, Evening), first published in 1854.