

GALATIANS 5:22-23
(OT: Ps 18:31-35; NT: Mt 4:1-11)

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- This is the last week in our series on the fruit of the Spirit:
 - Next, we've got great summer series lined up → Looking at *The Names of God*.
 - Names tell you a lot about someone:
 - Xn, Husband, Dad, Pastor: These things are my life.
 - Think of the names that belong to you.
 - God has a lot of names too → Some he gives himself and others his people give him.
 - They tell us a lot about him...
 - And they take us deeper into his heart.
 - Also got some great preachers lined up:
 - Some of our staff/ministry residents → We want to be a church that raises up next generation of leaders – to do that you've got to give them reps!
 - Also bringing in some very special guests:
 - As a church we want to participate in 500 church plants by 2030.
 - This summer we're bringing in four of our international partners to preach → We have much to learn from the global church.
- I'll be here most of the summer → worshipping alongside you in the pews.
 - If new here, we change up preaching schedule over summer.
 - Healthy for the reasons I just mentioned...
 - Healthy for bunch of other reasons too:
 - We're not a personality driven church...
 - Gives me space to spend time on leadership needs in our church...
 - Also gives me the chance to participate in some other ministries...
 - Few trips I'd love your prayer for:
 - Be in Mexico, Chile, and Argentina at the start of June → Meet existing church planters in our network and hopefully establish some new partnerships as work on church planting goal.
 - Be in D.C. for a week to teach a seminary class on preaching at RTS.
 - Be in Florida another week to preach at a student ministry camp.

Transition: But today, great privilege of finishing up our series on the fruit of the Spirit...
Let's read our passage one last time. [Read. Pray.]

INTRODUCTION

In a selfish world, part of God's design for your life is for you to be gentle and self-controlled.

- Not sure how that hits you → Not immediately obvious where we're going.
- Here's the big idea: Looking at two virtues this week → **gentleness** and **self-control**.
 - **Self-control** is about how we use our power.

- Specific application for today is that we need it (self-control) so that we use our power to be **gentle**.
- Let's get into beauty of these truths by following same outline used throughout the series.
 - Bet you'll be glad for different outline next week!
 - But don't miss what I've been trying to do:
 - Part of my job is to help you read the Bible yourself.
 - Many of you already more mature/experienced than me at this.
 - But some of you are new to it all.
 - This outline is helpful model → When you read the Bible, use it as tool.
 - **Definition:** What is the teaching of the passage?
 - **Gospel:** How does it connect to Christ?
 - **Application:** What difference does it make to my life?
- Let's get into it now...

DEFINITIONS

Let's start with self-control:

- Greek work used here in Galatians 5 is *enkrateia*.
 - It's another compound word:
 - *En* = in → *Krateia* = power
 - Together, self-control means to be *in power* over oneself.
 - Only appears 4x in NT → Each time it's an assumed virtue in the Xn life.
- Philip Ryken describes it this way: "*A person with self-control has the restraint and self-discipline not to be ruled by passion, and therefore is able to resist temptation.*"¹
- Note that self-control **assumes some kind of power**.
 - It is the ability **not** to do something that you could do.
 - Avoiding junk food isn't self-control if there aren't any Oreos in house.
 - It is the ability to look at a pack of Oreos, have the power to eat them all, but the self-control to only eat two.
 - Likewise, it's the ability **to do** something that you could not do.
 - You could eat the last Oreo yourself...
 - But you have the self-control to give it to a friend/one of your kids.

Self-control is to be in power over oneself.

What about gentleness?

- Perhaps the best way to get our arms around this one is to think...
 - Of **Jesus** who said he was **gentle and lowly in heart (Mt 11:29)**.
 - Or **Paul** who says to the Thessalonian church: **We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children (1 Th 2:7)**.²
- Instinctively, we know what it means to be gentle.
 - When you see a baby, what does your voice do?
 - We speak to them in a way we would never speak to each other!

We soothe, we're mild, we're tender, we're kind → That's what it means to be gentle.

Transition: Taking these 2 ideas together, easy to see how Jesus embodies them in the **Gospel**.

GOSPEL

- Matthew 4 → The temptation of Christ...
 - He has been in the wilderness, fasting for 40 days.
 - 3x Satan comes and tempts him to use his power in a selfish way:
 - #1: Turn these stones into bread...
 - #2: Remove yourself from this situation, allow the angels to lift you up.
 - #3: Fall down and worship me, and I'll make your suffering stop.
 - 3x Jesus refuses – quoting from the Scriptures each time...
 - #1: **Man shall not live on bread alone...**
 - #2: **You shall not put the Lord your God to the test...**
 - #3: **You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.**
- Look at Jesus:
 - Though he has the power to make his pain stop...
 - He has the self-control to resist temptation...
 - He succeeds where Adam and Eve – and all of us – did not...
- Why?
 - Bc he wants to use his power – not for himself, but for us...
 - Ultimately, he wants to use his power to go to the cross...
- Think of it from our perspective...
 - He has the power to leave us in our sin...
 - Salvation isn't necessary...
 - He could have left us to die as we deserve.
 - But instead, Jesus uses his power to save us...
 - He resists temptation...
 - So he can go to the cross for our salvation.

Jesus uses his power not to judge but to deal gently with us...
- The all-powerful God – all authority on heaven and earth belong to him...
 - Chose to be born as a **baby** → Is anything as gentle as that?
 - He is first introduced to us as a **lamb** → Is anything as gentle as that?
 - And then he dies on a **cross** with nails in his hands...
 - So tender... so kind...
 - Is anything as gentle as that?

Through self-control Jesus uses his power to be gentle.

Transition: Doesn't that change how we want to live?

- Let's move on from ability to resist/share Oreos and think of weightier matters instead.
- Let's do that by asking two questions:
 - What power do you have?
 - Do you have the self-control to wield it gently like Christ?

APPLICATION

**The more power you have, the gentler you need to be. WHY?
Bc the more power you have, the more dangerous you can be.**

[Work]

- I think about this a lot as your **pastor**...
 - I can make decisions that have a big impact on our community.
 - Do I use the authority I've been given to deal with people gently?
 - Dear church, I hope so, but pray for me.
- What about you?
 - Maybe God has given you authority/influence at work?
 - How do you deal with your colleagues/staff?
 - How do you respond when people fail?
 - Does it help to be harsh?
 - Or would the gentleness of Jesus be a better way instead?
 - **Illustrate:** I remember making a big mistake as a young assistant pastor...
 - Nervously I went to tell my boss...
 - He smiled and led with, "Isn't it good to be saved by Jesus?"
 - From there he taught me...
 - What to do next and how not to make that mistake again.

It's beautiful when we use our power to be gentle...

[Loved Ones]

- I also think about this a lot as a **husband/father**...
 - God has given me strength for welfare of those he's entrusted to my care.
 - I think about my dear **bride**...
 - Men, be careful with the power you have...
 - Don't underestimate that an argument feels different when you have physical power on your side.
 - We never want to bully/intimidate → We want to be gentle/kind.
 - Or I think about my **kids**...
 - They're all big now, but once they were wee with fat ankles/wrists.
 - I remember those tender moments after a nightmare...
 - I'd scoop them up and squeeze them on my lap...
 - *"Don't be afraid,"* I'd say, *"I'm the scariest thing in this house."*
 - They'd feel my strength...
 - But I wanted that to make them to feel safe.
 - This is why kids love wrestling with their parents:
 - They feel that you are strong...
 - But they know you'd never use your strength to hurt them.
 - Do I use my authority to deal with my loved ones gently?
- What about you?
 - How do you use authority/influence you have in the lives of those you love?

- Many of us have a tone of voice/presence that's anything but gentle.
- Our friends/spouses/kids are all tuned into it:
 - And they recoil when it comes out.
 - Whatever point you were trying to make immediately gets lost.
- What would it look like to try gentleness instead?
 - To ask them how they're feeling?
 - To speak that gentle word that turns away wrath?

It's beautiful when we use our power to be gentle...

THE CLOSE

And so I wonder...

- Who comes to mind when you think of people who've been gentle with you?
 - Maybe it's your boss?
 - Maybe it's a loved one?
 - It's definitely Christ.
- Are you living in such a way that when people in your life ask that question, they'll think of you?

How do we do that?

- Before reacting, we have the self-control to go to Christ...
 - We consider how he used his power to be gentle with us...
 - And then we treat others like that.
- Why not experiment this week?
 - Make it your goal to err on the side of gentleness.
 - You know in my life I'm not sure I've ever done that...
 - Situations I regret are all when I've been too harsh!
 - Let's try it...
 - When your boss is a **jerk**, or your **employee** is late...
 - When your **spouse** is unreasonable, or your **kids** disobey...
 - When your friend is **thoughtless**, or your **neighbor** mows too early...

Practically speaking, gentleness is so disarming → Completely changes way we interact.

Spiritually speaking, when we use self-control to be gentle, we become like X.

And in our selfish world, we need more of that.

- I'm concerned that American Xnty is confused about how to wield power.
- Many seem to believe that the way to respond to a lost world is to punch back.
- But that is not the way of X → And that is not the way of his church:
 - Early Xnty spread so rapidly in the first three centuries bc Xns were so unlike the world → They were salt and light.³
 - Showed extraordinary compassion, sacrificial love, and gentleness.
 - Especially to powerless, widows/orphans, imprisoned/sick.

- French philosopher and secular humanist **Luc Ferry** says that this approach – rooted in belief that all people made in image of God and grace offered us in Jesus – was “*an unprecedented idea at the time, and one to which our world owes its entire democratic inheritance.*”

***We can change our workplaces, our families, even like those first Xns the entire world...
But only if, like Jesus, we use our power to be gentle.***

CONCLUSION

- Okay, our series is over...
 - What sticks out to you from these last few weeks?
 - How do you want to grow?
- We can live lives of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
 - That’s the kind of life God’s designed us to live.
 - And that’s the kind of life I think we all long for...

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Luke Bretherton, *A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*.
- Jay Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Martin Luther, *Galatians*.
- Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*.
- Douglas Moo, *Galatians*.
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.
- John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*.

Endnotes

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians (Reformed Expository Commentary)*, Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing (2005), ch. 19.

² Paul uses a different Greek word in 1 Th 2:7 than in Gal 5:23, but the point still stands.

³ I owe this point – and the language that follows – to Peter Wehner, *Praising Trump with Faint Damnation*, accessed [here](#) on 5/23/24.