*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 8 - 13

“Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness”

**Monday, November 8 1 Corinthians 4:14-21**

“What do you prefer . . . discipline and scolding, or . . . quiet love and gentleness?”

 In this passage, Paul speaks of his relationship with the Corinthian Christians as that of a father with his children. To the majority he gives a warm fatherly directive to imitate his love for God, but the few who are stirring up trouble are given a stern rebuke.

 The analogy he uses is the difference between an instructor and a parent. The word “instructor” is translated different ways in various versions of the Bible, sometimes “tutor” and at other times “guide.” It was usually used of a slave who was responsible for guiding the conduct of a child from age six to adulthood. A child might have any number of “instructors” but only one father. Similarly, the Corinthians might have many people who would help them as they grew in the Christian faith. But they would have only one spiritual father and that was Paul.

 When he returns, Paul will speak gently to them in person out of love. But if necessary he will also come with discipline and scolding. Both are characteristics of a father who seeks to “train up his child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

*Heavenly Father. You deal with me according to what I need from you. When I am walking closely with you, you are a gentle Father. When I have strayed, your fatherly discipline brings me back to you. Thank you for your love. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 9 2 Corinthians 10:1-4**

“I, Paul, plead with you . . . with the gentleness of Christ”

 It is clear from Paul’s letters that he faced criticism from those who disagreed either with his message, with the way he presented the Gospel, or with both. A few examples of their criticisms include: Paul is brave when writing letters but cowardly in face-to-face situations; his relationship with Christ is inferior to theirs; and, his speaking ability is lacking in power and conviction.

 We should always respond to criticism with the Spirit of Christ. When Christ was gentle in his ministry, he was accused of being weak. But, as Jesus explained in his Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew chapter 5), gentleness is one of the virtues that brings blessing to the life of the believer.

 Paul’s response to his critics is to seek to follow Jesus’ words and example, and he answers harsh words with gentle speech. If that makes him weak in their eyes, so be it. For Paul, the only critic that truly matters is God.

*Dear God. You know how difficult it is for me to respond to harsh words with gentle speech. But, I want to follow the example of Christ, so help me be gentle. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 10 Galatians 6:1-5**

“Gently restore the Christian who has sinned”

 In Genesis, after Cain has killed Abel, God comes to Cain and asks about Abel. Cain responds: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Since that first murder, the Bible has consistently said, “Yes! We are our brother’s keeper.”

 In this passage, Paul is speaking to the occasion of a fellow Christian who has committed a sin. Paul tells us that it is our responsibility to gently help that person back onto the right path. Gentleness is crucial for restoration, and only those who are living under the Spirit of God should be involved. As John Stott comments: “Only the spiritual are gentle enough to be effective.”

 Paul then adds that we need to be watchful and examine our motives lest we also become tempted. This suggests that gentleness is grounded in the realization of our personal weaknesses and proneness to sin.

*Lord Jesus Christ. Aware of my own faults and the times I myself have failed, I will be gentle when dealing with the faults and failures of others. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 8 - 13

“Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness”

**Thursday, November 11 1 Timothy 6:6-11**

“You belong to God. Flee from all evil things and pursue . . . gentleness“

 The verbs of verse 11 are dramatic: “flee” and “pursue.” Timothy is to be in flight from false teaching and the love of money, and he is to be in pursuit of godly virtues such as gentleness.

 “Flee and pursue” is a good way of viewing the life of Christian discipleship. There are things that must be constantly avoided - and not just passively. To flee implies that something is after us. Paul’s view of evil is that it is active and powerful in the world, and we need to be active in opposing it. Pursuit is the other side of Christian discipleship. This is where the intentional growth of specific virtues takes place, cultivated by the presence of the Spirit within us and the willingness of our human spirit to be used by God to show his love to others.

 Gentleness is the strength of character that is willing to flee pride and power and self-promotion, and instead pursue a personal humility that relies on God’s power and God’s promise to lift us up.

*I belong to you, Lord, and it is my desire each day to be growing into the person you are calling me to be. I know that includes having and displaying a gentle spirit. May gentleness grow in me, with your help and in your love. Amen.*

**Friday, November 12 1 Peter 3:13-17**

“. . . do this with gentleness . . .”

 Peter encourages us to always be ready to give a reason for what we believe. He uses as an example the hope of Christ that is in us and is being communicated by the way we speak and act. Especially in times of difficulty and suffering when there seems to be no human reason for hope, we can share the hope of Christ with others because it has helped us in our time of need.

 Peter goes on to say that when we share the truth about Christ with others, we are to do it in the spirit of Christ: with gentleness and respect and a clear conscience. To be gentle is to be like Christ as he lovingly met people at the point of their need or hurt. To respect someone means we should not “talk down” to them. We are not better than them. What we are is forgiven by Jesus Christ. We are “one beggar sharing a piece of bread with another.” To have a clear conscience means that we do not have the option of living a “double life” or a “secret life” where our words and actions contradict the truth that we say we believe. As Christians, we live in harmony with our faith.

*As I share my life with others, Father, and speak of the wonderful things you continue to do for me, may the gentleness of Christ clearly shine through me. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 13 Matthew 11:28-30**

“Come to me . . . for I am gentle”

 Jesus extends a tender invitation to intimacy with him for all those who are weary and burdened. “Weary” evokes the image of persons exhausted from their work or journey, while “burdened” indicates persons weighed down with heavy loads. Jesus extends the invitation by inviting us to take his yoke upon ourselves. The “yoke” was the wooden frame joining two animals (usually oxen) when pulling heavy loads.

 The yoke of discipleship joining us to Jesus brings rest because he is “gentle and humble in heart.” Unlike the rigidly legalistic Pharisees who strut their authority and expect praise for their good works, Jesus works gently with us, teaching us the good news and bringing healing to our lives.

*Jesus, lover of my soul. I thank you for the gentle work you are doing in my life. May I, in my relationships with others, practice a similar gentleness. Amen.*