

Meekness, Gentleness, and Kindness

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If someone asked you to describe God, would these three words—meekness, gentleness, and kindness—come to mind? Today, we're going to look at these related words, their many offshoots, and some of their meaning for us. Let's begin in 2 Corinthians 10:1. Today, I will read most of the scriptures to save time. You can note them and look them up later if you wish. 2 Corinthians 10:1 from the New King James says:

2 Corinthians 10:1. *Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. (NKJV)*

Paul says he wants to deal with them as Christ would, using these two qualities which Christ exhibited—meekness and gentleness. The Good News Bible renders this verse:

2 Corinthians 10:1. *I, Paul, make a personal appeal to you — I who am said to be meek and mild when I am with you, but harsh ... when I am away. By the gentleness and kindness of Christ
2) I beg you not to force me to be harsh when I come; ... (GNT)*

They all knew Paul could be harsh but would rather be meek and mild. Notice also that this translation uses "kindness" instead of "meekness", which is used in the King James Version and the New King James. So, here we have this trilogy of characteristics—

Meekness, Gentleness, and Kindness

which is the title of today's message. They define a part of Christ's character and should define ours. This study started as an effort to understand meekness and gentleness better. It was an outgrowth of a sermon given by Greg Gaetzman on "Meekness."

The word translated "meekness" in 2 Corinthians 10:1 is Strong's number 4236, *praiootes*, and means *gentleness, by implication, humility*: rendered *meekness*. It's from Strong's number 4235 meaning *gentle, i.e. humble*: rendered *meek*. It is a form of Strong's number 4239 meaning *mild, [by implication] humble*: and *meek*.

The word translated *gentleness* in the same verse is Strong's number 1932, *epieikeia*, which means *suitableness, i.e. (by implication) equity, mildness*: rendered *clemency, gentleness*. Strong's number 1932 is from 1933 meaning *mild*: rendered *gentle, moderation, and patient*.

So, we see that instead of two characteristics, we now have humility, mildness, clemency, moderation, patience, and kindness as well as meekness and gentleness. That is quite a bit from two words in one verse. There is also the word "base" in the King James and "lowly" in the New King James, which means *humble*. It is Strong's number 5011.

The word translated "gentleness" in Galatians 5:23 (the fruits of the spirit) is Strong's 5544, *chrestotes*, and means *usefulness*, as in "I've always wanted to be useful." This word also means *excellence (in character or demeanor): rendered gentleness, goodness, kindness*. This Greek word is translated "kindness" seven times in the New Testament.

From a dictionary, we learn a little more about this trilogy.

"Meek" means *pliant, patient, and mild; not inclined to anger or resentment*. It also means *gentle or kind*.

So, these are three peas in one pod. They almost define each other.

"Gentle" comes from an old French term for *noble birth*. It has several meanings.

1. *Belonging to the upper classes of polite society.*
2. *Like or suitable to polite society, refined, courteous, etc. Few, if any of us, are from the upper classes of society, but it is our destiny to become the royalty of the universe as kings and priests in the Kingdom of God.*
3. *Generous and kind.*
4. *Easily handled, tamed like a gentle horse.*

Are we tame? Or, are we rebellious?

5. *Kindly, serene, patient.*
6. *Not violent, harsh or rough, a gentle tap or a gentle rebuke.*
7. *Gradual as in a gentle slope.*
8. *Gentle; to make gentle, mild or pleasant; to tame or train like an animal; to calm or soothe as by stroking.*

"Kindness" is a *state, quality, or habit of being kind; kind act or treatment; kind feeling, affection, good will*. "Kind" is *sympathetic, friendly, gentle, tenderhearted, generous, loving, affectionate*. Kind implies the possession of *sympathetic or generous qualities*,

neither habitually or specifically. It implies a charitable or altruistic inclination to be good.

So, from a dictionary we learn from among many similar meaning terms that meekness is gentleness and kindness; gentleness is kindness; and kindness is gentleness. These three words each have other meanings and different usages, but all are very similar. Like peas in a pod, these characteristics are not identical, but very close in meaning. If we are strong in one of these characteristics, we probably will be in the others as well. Yet, I'm sure we all have room for growth in these areas as well as all others.

Before we move on, we must look at another of the peas in that pod. That being humility. It is Strong's number 6038 in the Old Testament and number 5012 in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, Strong's number 6038 is rendered *gentleness, humility, and meekness*. In the New Testament, Strong's number 5012 is *humiliation of mind, humbleness of mind, humility (of mind, loneliness (of mind) and modesty* (something taken all too lightly these days).

Numbers 12, verse 3, says *Moses was very humble* in the New King James, but the King James says that *Moses was very meek*. Perhaps we could say that humility is a very important attribute of meekness. "Humility" is *the absence of pride or self-assertion* (something seen frequently in election years). "Humble" is *having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or shortcomings, low in condition, rank, or position; lowly, unpretentious, modest*.

Under "humble" in the dictionary, I found this in the synonyms: "Meek" stresses a mildness and patience of disposition, which is not easily stirred to anger or resentment. Isn't it ironic that the most noted man for humility and meekness in the Bible lost entry into the Promised Land because of anger? 1 Corinthians 10:12 comes to mind.

1 Corinthians 10:12. *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (NKJV)*

Let's look at some examples of these words in scripture to get a better understanding. Matthew 11 verse 29 in the New King James says:

Matthew 11:29. *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (NKJV)*

The word in this New King James is "gentle" and the marginal notation reads "meek", which is how this word is rendered in the King James Version. "Lowly" is another term for "humble". Here, in this verse, we find three of the four terms in one verse where Christ tells us His character. Let's read this in context; verse 28:

Matthew 11:28. *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29) *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*
30) *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" (NKJV)

This shows that if we have Christ's character in us, if we are meek, gentle, humble, and kind, it is not hard to follow Him. How can you read this passage without feeling that He is kind? This is what Jesus is and what we should be. Indeed, it is what we must become to be in His kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

The harsh and unforgiving need not apply—unless they want to change. They will have to trade in their rod of iron for a shepherd's staff. Let's look at 1 Peter 2, verse 18, which says:

1 Peter 2:18. *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.* (NKJV)

We see here that "good" equates with "gentle". The inference is that if you are not gentle, you are not good.

Good and gentle are contrasted here by harsh. The inference is that if you are not good and gentle, you are harsh, which means *offensive to the mind or feelings; cruel or severe*. Do many in authority become harsh or that harsh people often get positions of authority?

Now, let's look more at kindness. Ruth 2:20 says:

Ruth 2:20. *Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives."* (NKJV)

Here we see kindness that comes from God, as in He cares for His people. Ruth 3:10 says:

Ruth 3:10. *Then he [Boaz] said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich."* (NKJV)

This verse shows the kindness of God coming through Ruth. Often we see more of the attributes of God coming through foreigners rather than from those of the promises. The story of Ruth is a story of kindness. "Kindness" is from Strong's number 2617, *cheched* (kheh'-sed); from 2616; *kindness; by implication (towards God) piety: ...devotion or beauty: rendered favour, good deed ... kindly, (loving-) kindness, merciful (kindness), mercy, pity*. Strong's 2617 is used nearly two hundred times total in the Bible. This word is rendered *loving kindness* many times in the Psalms a few times in the Proverbs. We see this in Psalms 51:1, which says:

Psalm 51:1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. (NKJV)*

King David knew God was kind and David needed that kindness very much at this time in his life. Sometimes we can relate. This word is rendered "good deeds" in Nehemiah 13:14, which says:

Nehemiah 13:14. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services! (NKJV)*

It is rendered "favor" in Esther 2:17, where we read:

Esther 2:17. *The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight ... (NKJV)*

How often do we need grace and favor from our King? Psalm 33:5 says this:

Psalm 33:5. *He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. (NKJV)*

The word "goodness" is also Strong's number 2617, which means *kindness*. Where did the idea originate that the God of the Old Testament was harsh?

I learned an interesting thing concerning the root word of Strong's number 2617. Strong's number 2616 which means *to bow (the neck only ... in courtesy to an equal)*, and means *to be kind*. I've done this for years, with a simple greeting and never thought of it as being kind, but I see now that it is. Acknowledging anyone's existence is a simple act of kindness.

We have many opportunities to show kindness to many people in and out of the church. We are God's representatives on earth at this time; and, since God is kind, we too should be kind to all we come to in contact with, but especially to the household of faith. I was thinking we could do this quite often when we drive by letting someone trying to get into our lane a little bit earlier if they were trying to get into our lane.

This word is used repeated in the story of King David. 1 Samuel 15 verse 6 reads:

1 Samuel 15:6. *Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. (NKJV)*

Saul showed kindness to the Kenites because they showed kindness to the Israelites. As it is said, "You get what you give."

Beginning in 1 Samuel 20, we find the story of David and Jonathan's kindness for one another, which David carried on through with Jonathan's family. They loved one another as we should love one another. That means they cared for one another. They were friends as we should be. In this, good deeds resulted in favor being granted. We all want and need that favor in our lives every day.

In Exodus 20, verse 6, God tells us that:

Exodus 20:6. *[(God) shows] mercy to thousands, to those who love [Him] and keep [His] commandments. (NKJV)*

"Mercy" is the same word rendered kindness. Indeed, this word is used 137 times for "mercy" in the King James.

The word rendered "favor" in the New King James or "grace" in the King James is Strong's number 2580 and means *kindness or favor*. An example of this is found in Genesis 19:19, which says:

Genesis 19:19. *Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; ... (NKJV)*

He (referring to Lot) just as accurately could have said, "Your servant has found kindness in your sight, and you have increased your kindness which you have shown me."

The word translated "grace in the old Testament is always the same word, Strong's number 2580, except for one time in Ezra 9:8. That is Strong's number 8467, meaning *graciousness*, which is similar to the New Testament meaning. "Gracious" is another word used to describe God. We recently had a sermon on that subject.

Exodus 34:6 says:

Exodus 34:6. *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, (NKJV)*

Among the renderings of these three Hebrew words translated "gracious" is the word "mercy", which here means *compassionate*. Who was it that said, "I want to say something warm and gracious"? "Gracious, it's warm in here." By the way, if you are ever cold, just get up and speak. That should solve the problem.

Does it ever seem we're going in circles like a line on a spool? We keep crossing the same point repeatedly. You might want to turn to Genesis 24. We'll begin in verse 12.

Genesis 24:12. *Then he said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.*

13) *Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.*

14) *Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' — let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." (NKJV)*

We see here that by Rebekah's actions, the servant would know God was showing kindness to his master Abraham. Do others see kindness in our actions?

Next, we'll read a whole psalm, Psalm 117 beginning in verse 1.

Psalm 117.1. *Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!*

2) *For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord! (NKJV)*

Here we have both the words "merciful" and "kindness" rendered from Strong's number 2617. This is also translated loving kindness and faithfulness. We won't read the entire next psalm, Psalm 119 beginning in verse 76.

Psalm 119:76. *Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, According to Your word to Your servant. (NKJV)*

The Good News Bible rendering is *constant love—Let your constant love comfort me.* This helps us see that love and kindness are also very closely related. Proverbs 19:22 says:

Proverbs 19:22. *What is [desirable] in a man is kindness, ... (NKJV)*

Many things are desirable in our lives, but kindness is the most desirable. It seems my most common word in prayer is "mercy", which is the same word as "kindness". We all need God's mercy. Shouldn't we be showing it as well? Proverbs 31, verse 26 says:

Proverbs 31:26. *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. (NKJV)*

Kindness is a law, indeed, like love. All law has a degree of kindness in it because it's designed to prevent hurting others or ourselves. Isaiah 54:8:

Isaiah 54:8. *With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer.*
9) *"For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.*

10) *For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has mercy on you. (NKJV)*

This tells us God has everlasting kindness and will always have mercy on us. Without these things, we could have no hope. Joel 2, verse 13:

Joel 2:13. *So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.*

14) *Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him ... (NKJV)*

If you have gone astray, remember God is merciful and kind. He doesn't want to hurt us. He would much rather bless us. Jonah knew all of this. In chapter 4, verse 2, Jonah says:

Jonah 4:2. *So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? (I know what you are like.) Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. (NKJV)*

As I asked before, where do people get the idea that the God of the Old Testament is harsh? Jonah knew God was "*gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.*" We might say, "God is easily entreated." If this is harsh, I'll take it any day.

Another word translated "gentle" is Strong's number 2261, epios (ay'-pee-os), which means mild or kind. It is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, which says, "*gentle ... as a nursing mother (to) her own [child]*" and in 2 Timothy 2:24.

2 Timothy 2:24. *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, (NKJV)*

I was fortunate to have such a man as my first minister in the church. I don't know if he could have been harsh if he had to be. He served to his own and his wife's hurt. He cared for all, but especially for the least of us. His life could be summed up in one phrase found in John 10:15, where Jesus said, "*and I lay down My life for the sheep.*" Thankfully, I was lead to find a group that also practices this event at this time. One man was used by Christ to get my life in Christ started and another small group of such people to restore it. Both have to be gentle as we saw Christ says He is.

Revelation 3:20 says that we must hear His voice and the knocking at the door. We don't open it to strangers. One way to tell a stranger from a shepherd is how they treat the sheep. An older friend, who is not in the church, told me she recently attended her

last Catholic funeral. It was for a very well thought of and much serving local lady. The priest said all kinds of bad things about her, so much, so that most of the large group of attendees walked out in protest. This man proved by his harshness that he did not follow Christ.

I'm sure all of you know of others that you didn't want to open the door to, but some are very persuasive. I remember a scenario that was observed in disgust when Worldwide was breaking up. Some were leaving, but some of those returned. It was observed that if they returned more than once, they never left again. Psalm 18:35 says:

Psalm 18:35. *You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. (NKJV)*

This word "gentleness" is also translated as "humility" and "meekness." The word "meek" in the King James Old Testament is from Strong's number 6035, which means *gentle in mind, needy in circumstances, and rendered humble, lowly, meek, and poor.* The New Testament equivalent is Strong's number 4239, meaning *mild, humble, and meek.* There is also Strong's number 4236 in the New Testament, which means *gentleness, humility, and meekness;* and Strong's number 4240 meaning *mildness, humility, and meekness.* Zephaniah 3:2 says:

Zephaniah 2:3. *Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. (NKJV)*

The word "humility" is Strong's number 6038 and means *clemency, gentleness, and humility.*

An example of the interrelationship of these is found in the Old Testament word Strong's number 2616, *chacad* (khaw-sad'), which means *to be kind*, but is translated *merciful* rather than *kind*. It is an act that I've done many thousands of times without realizing my actual behavior. As I said before, it means *to bow (the neck only ... in courtesy to an equal)*. This is a very normal greeting for me. Like I said before, not only didn't I realize I was being kind, I had no idea that it was, and is, a merciful act.

"Meek" in the King James is rendered in the New King James as *oppressed and lowly*, one time each; *gentle and poor*, twice each; *meek*, four times; and *gentle*, five times. "Meekness" is rendered *humility*, four times; *gentleness and meekness*, five times each.

We find that meekness, gentleness, humility, and kindness, are not used very often in the Bible. This is probably because this characteristic is not a very common trait. I said it in the singular because these words are so closely related that not only are they interchangeable in Scripture, they are as one in our character. If we are meek, we will be humble, gentle, and kind. If we are gentle, we will be humble, meek, and kind. If we are humble, we will be gentle, meek, and kind. If we are kind, we will be humble, meek, and gentle. It is, indeed, a singular trait with many names.

In closing, turn to Matthew 5. To get the context, we'll begin in verse 1.

Matthew 5:1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.*

2) *Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

3) *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4) *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

5) *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

6) *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

7) *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (NKJV)*

Because God is meek, gentle, kind, humble, and merciful, those who have and seek more of these traits shall obtain them, for of such is the Kingdom of God.