

Lesson 36 - The Character of Gentleness

1. What is the fifth item listed when one has the fruit of the Spirit? **Galatians 5:22**

EGW: Through God's word the light has been shining upon his people. Will those thus privileged appreciate their blessings? Will that which is wrong, in action, in spirit, and in thought, be renounced? Those who bear some good fruit must be pruned and purified from all common sensual things, from selfishness, ungodliness and deception in any line of business, and from greed expressed in any transaction in trade with their fellow-men. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory, not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." {1888 1638.2}

2. What could we become if we exercise gentleness? **2 Samuel 22:36, Psalms 18:35**

EGW: It is those who are in positions of trust, those who have great light, large opportunities, who are not forming characters and carrying into their life practice principles that will stand the test of trial. These need to be rebuked sharply for their influence over the young. The impetuous temper must be eradicated. When provoked do not pour out a torrent of words and commit sin; but talk with your Lord about it. Say to your soul, "Be still, and know that I am God." If the God-given responsibilities of saving souls ready to perish, were understood, old habits, traditionary sentiments that clog and hinder reformatory action would be cut away from the heart and life, and a transformation would take place in character. Advice, reproof, and counsel should be given patiently, taking the bitterness of the self-mingling spirit out of it. The language should not be exaggerated, but should be gentle and humble, The stern, harsh spirit that humiliates and crushes the wrong-doer will seldom work a reformation. "Thy gentleness hath made me great." It sets before the wrong-doer his sins, and helps him to recover himself from the snares of Satan. {PC 97.1}

3. What is God's gentleness supposed to lift us up from? **2 Corinthians 5:21**

EGW: It binds the willing souls in captivity to Jesus Christ, bowing their hearts to the gentleness of

Jesus Christ. O it means so much more than finite minds can comprehend, to present in every missionary effort Jesus Christ and him crucified. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." [Isaiah 53:5.] "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [2 Corinthians 5:21.] This is to be the burden of our work. If any one thinks he is capable of teaching in the Sabbath-school or in the day school the science of education, he needs first to learn the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, that he may teach this the highest of all sciences. {CE 156.1}

4. So, if we respond correctly to God's gentleness towards us in not treating us as we deserve, like striking us down when we sin, when we become great, what does that really mean we are doing?

Matthew 5:19

EGW: Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish system, and he swept aside the maxims, injunctions, traditions, and precepts with which men had encumbered the plan of salvation. When he swept away the rubbish with which men had buried up the truth, they thought he was sweeping away the truth itself. But he met their unspoken thoughts, saying: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The maxims, traditions, and doctrines of men had served the purpose for which Satan had instigated them, and had eclipsed the dignity and honor of the holy law. Forms and ceremonies had taken the place of vital godliness; but Christ came to exalt the law, to rid it of the rubbish that men had placed upon it, and thus to let it shine forth in its exalted character, and reveal to the world the divine glory of its Author. {ST, October 29, 1896 par. 6}

5. Who exemplified how unbelievers should be handled? **2 Samuel 18:5, 2**

EGW: From the walls of the city the long lines of the rebel army were in full view. The usurper was accompanied by a vast host, in comparison with which David's force seemed but a handful. But as the king looked upon the opposing forces, the thought uppermost in his mind was not of the crown and the kingdom, nor of his own life, that depended upon the wage of battle. The father's heart was filled with love and pity for his rebellious son. As the army filed out from the city gates David encouraged his faithful soldiers, bidding them go forth trusting that the God of Israel would give them the victory. But even here he could not repress his love for Absalom. As Joab, leading the first column, passed his king, the conqueror of a hundred battlefields stooped his proud head to hear the

monarch's last message, as with trembling voice he said, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." And Abishai and Ittai received the same charge--"Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." {PP 743.1}

6. What substitution would David have done for his son, showing what Jesus did for us, since Absalom was not treated gently? **2 Samuel 18:33**

EGW: The victorious army, returning from the field, approached the city, their shouts of triumph awaking the echoes of the hills. But as they entered the city gate the shout died away, their banners drooped in their hands, and with downcast gaze they advanced more like those who had suffered defeat than like conquerors. For the king was not waiting to bid them welcome, but from the chamber above the gate his wailing cry was heard, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" {PP 745.1}

7. Who else should be led gently? **Isaiah 40:11**

EGW: God's people must give to the world a representation of the character of God in Jesus Christ. The Christian churches are fast losing their knowledge of God. His character has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. But a message has come from God which must be proclaimed. The trumpet must give a certain sound. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to proclaim these things to the churches." The truth, the revelation which Jesus gave to John, must be sounded forth everywhere. "Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." {ST, December 23, 1897 par. 14}

8. What challenging group are we to be gentle towards? **1 Peter 2:18**

EGW: Those who compose our churches have traits of character that will lead them, if they are not very careful, to feel indignant because on account of misrepresentation, their liberty in regard to working on Sunday is taken away. Do not fly into a passion over this matter, but take everything in prayer to God. He alone can restrain the power of rulers. Walk not rashly. Let none boast unwisely of their liberty, using it for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" [1 Peter 2:17]. {2MR 193.5}

This advice is to be of real value to all who are to be brought into strait places. Nothing that shows defiance, or that could be interpreted as maliciousness, must be shown. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" [1 Peter 2:18-24]. {2MR 194.1}

9. Who did Paul tell us is our example in gentleness? **2 Corinthians 10:1**

EGW: Jesus expects that his gentleness and condescension will be reproduced in those whom he blesses. Jesus came to our world, and chose the lowliest life, took the humblest position, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps. The Majesty of heaven was meek and lowly in heart, and he expects all his followers to catch his spirit of meekness and lowliness, and become wise in helping those that mourn. There is no time in life when we shall not need to cultivate meekness and lowliness of heart. Those who minister in connection with Christ, will be called upon to manifest meekness and lowliness, that they may reveal this attribute to those who are learners in the school of Christ. A possession of the gentleness of Christ means the possession of true dignity. The adorning that is of value with God is a meek and quiet spirit, and it is of more value than gold and silver and precious gems. The attributes of God are goodness, mercy, love, long-suffering, and patience, and his followers are to possess the same attributes of character, representing Christ in true spirituality. Meekness, the treasure of inward wealth, may be possessed in the midst of poverty and sorrow. The soul reveals the source of its strength in the manifestation of meekness and lowliness of heart; for the grace of meekness has its origin in the source of all blessedness, and those who possess this grace are in harmony with Christ and the Father. The followers of Christ thus become one with each other. If meekness and love are not a part of our character, we are not the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our whole experience is feeble and uncertain. {ST, August 22, 1895 par. 2}

10. What is the opposite of being gentle? **2 Timothy 2:24, Titus 3:2**

EGW: Every warning for this time must be faithfully delivered; but "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." We must cherish carefully the words of our God lest we be contaminated by the

deceptive workings of those who have left the faith. We are to resist their spirit and influence with the same weapon our Master used when assailed by the prince of darkness,--"It is written." We should learn to use the word of God skillfully. The exhortation is, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." There must be diligent work and earnest prayer and faith to meet the winding error of false teachers and seducers; for "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." These words portray the character of the men the servants of God will have to meet. "False accusers," "despisers of those that are good," will attack those who are faithful to their God in this degenerate age. But the ambassador of Heaven must manifest the spirit that was displayed in the Master. In humility and love he must labor for the salvation of men. {RH, January 10, 1888 par. 6}

11. Jesus did not seem so gentle when He was flipping tables, but how can we tell that He was actually gentle still? **Matthew 21:12-14 [Hint who still approached Jesus without thought in verse 14?]**

EGW: As priests and rulers looked upon the face of Christ, terror took possession of them; for divinity was flashing through humanity. This was evidence that they had not looked for. They understood the meaning of his words, and, amazed and terrified, they fled from the humble, travel-stained Nazarene, as if he had been surrounded by an avenging army of heavenly beings. But as they hurried away from the sacred precincts, they found that they had received no bodily harm, and their terror-stricken souls began to recover. They said, We will return to the temple, and demand by what authority he is doing this work. But when they saw the work that Jesus had been doing since their expulsion, they did not confront him with the assurance that they thought they would. They found the Saviour healing the sick and the dying. "The blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them." On their ears fell the sound of rejoicing and the song of praise. In the very temple itself, children who had been restored to health were waving palm branches, and singing hosannas to the Son of David. Baby voices were lisping the praises of the mighty Healer. The people were rejoicing; for those among them who had been sick and dying were now restored to perfect health. But the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep were as music in the ears of the priests when compared with these sounds of rejoicing. Cattle sales meant money to them. But the gladness and joy of the people who had been restored gave them no satisfaction. {RH, February 13, 1900 par. 3}

12. What reason is given for striving against someone? **Proverbs 3:30**

EGW: They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction

of wrong principles into His cause. {PK 31.3}

13. When is striving acceptable? **Luke 13:24, Romans 15:20, Romans 15:30, Hebrews 12:4**

EGW: Our enemy may appear to have the advantage of us in number, in the variety of resources, and in position; but we must not be discouraged, nor turn cowards. We have Christ with us, and he is continually going forward, leading to advanced truths and greater light. Those who will follow must go forward in spite of manifold foes, powerful and difficult to resist because they work in a subtle, underhand manner. We shall have to meet, not only human power, but the principalities of the kingdom of darkness,--"wicked spirits in high places." Even our friends will oppose us, and we shall have to meet scornful sneers, because we venture to choose the better way. Our motives will be misjudged, and even our character and habits maligned. But "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." We have an incessant strife, but is not the reward at the end of the conflict worthy of all the labor? Will not the eternal weight of glory more than compensate for every wound, every grief, every sorrow? Will not every sacrifice bring returns in treasures that are without price? {ST, September 7, 1891 par. 8}

14. What is the future for those that strive against others without a religious cause? **Isaiah 41:11**

EGW: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God: with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they shall be nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and thou shalt not find them, even them that contend with thee: they that war with thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For the Lord will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee: fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." {SpM 202.1}

Your business now is simply to trust in the Lord. In your intense earnestness your efforts to make a success in a good work have been too much for your human frame, but you put your trust in the Lord, my Brother, fear not. . . . {SpM 202.2}

15. What is placed upon those that are not gentle in their approach with God but strive against Him?
Isaiah 45:9

EGW: "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him that striveth with

his Maker. {1888 1230.2}

The Lord was testing and proving men. O, if they had been divested of self, if they had turned from the course of selfishness, and, as God's peculiar people, had chosen to carry out his wise and gracious purposes, what a blessing would have resulted, not only to the individuals themselves, but to their families and to the church and the institutions that God had established. But alas, instead of obeying the voice of God, listening to the warnings and admonitions he had given, they gave heed to the counsels of their own hearts, and to words from the lips of men. Thus they imperiled not only their own souls, but the souls of others through their influence. {1888 1231.1}

16. In looking for ways to avoid commandment keeping, looking for loopholes in God's law through even the use of His Word in a twisted manner, what is it all considered? **Titus 3:9**

EGW: Yet this apostasy, widespread as it has come to be, is not universal. Not all in the world are lawless and sinful; not all have taken sides with the enemy. God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will come soon to end the reign of sin and death. And there are many who have been worshiping Baal ignorantly, but with whom the Spirit of God is still striving. {PK 171.1}

17. What suggested action should one take to avoid brawling? **Proverbs 21:9**

EGW: But while we are to speak as having authority, we should do nothing in a defiant spirit. If our hearts are fully surrendered to God, we shall unite meekness and love with truth and decision. We are "to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." {RH, December 6, 1892 par. 3}

18. What object lesson is gentleness compared to? **1 Thessalonians 2:7**

EGW: In this first epistle, Paul referred to his manner of labor among the Thessalonians. He declared that he had not sought to win converts through deception or guile. "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted

unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." {AA 256.4}

19. What did Jesus compare His gentleness with? **Matthew 23:37**

EGW: He looks down the ages, and sees the covenant people scattered in every land, like wrecks on a desert shore. He sees in the temporal retribution about to fall upon her children, but the first draught from that cup of wrath which at the final Judgment she must drain to its dregs. Divine pity, yearning love, finds utterance in the mournful words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" [Matthew 23:37.] Oh that thou, a nation favored above every other, hadst known the time of thy visitation, and the things that belong unto thy peace! I have stayed the angel of justice, I have called thee to repentance, but all in vain. It is not merely servants, delegates, and prophets, whom thou hast refused and rejected, but the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer. If thou art destroyed, thou art alone responsible. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." {4SP 21.1}

20. What is from above that is gentle? **James 3:17**

EGW: It is not the profession we make, but the fruits we bear that reveal the condition of the heart. Says the inspired apostle, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." True piety will not stiffen the character in stubborn, set ways and ideas. The Christian will not be unyielding and dictatorial, but will consider himself a learner in Christ's school. He will not be of that class who are fond of lecturing others, sermonizing, condemning, criticising, but will become meek and lowly in heart, representing Jesus, the Light of the world. {ST, December 15, 1887 par. 12}