

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 4
Gentleness

“Thy gentleness hath made me great,” II Samuel 22:36b.

INTRODUCTION: The above words were spoken by David. At first sight this is a most remarkable claim for a professional soldier, a warrior king, to make. David is an old man and he is reviewing his career. He is recalling his past life. He considers his present position as King of Israel, and then he traces his advancement, his greatness as king, and gives credit to God’s gentleness.

No doubt, David was telling us that the only way by which he may be considered great lies in the extent to which he manifested his relationships and responsibilities as God’s anointed by the divine gift of gentleness. In other words, he traces his own greatness to the gentleness God gave to him which melted and mellowed him.

Someone has said, “Meekness made David a monarch; kindness made him a king; and gentleness made him a great man.” For the lesson today we will notice first, David’s gentleness; and then, Jesus’ gentleness.

I. DAVID’S GENTLENESS.

1. In forfeiting personal advantage. In I Samuel 24:1-21 we see God’s gentleness making David great when he deliberately forfeited his advantage over his enemy, Saul. Saul was hunting David in I Samuel 24:1-3. Inadvertently without any bodyguard, Saul entered into a cave where David and his men were hiding. Because of the circumstances, David could easily have taken Saul’s life as Saul slept, but God’s gentleness was in David’s heart. “And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD,” I Samuel 24:6.

Later David revealed to Saul that he had been within a step of his death. David had checked his first impulse to kill the king. It was this display of gentleness on David’s part that thawed the icy heart of Saul, at least for a season. Saul said, “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me,” I Samuel 24:17, 18a.

Paul said, “The servant of the Lord must...be gentle,” II Timothy 2:24.

2. In heeding the advice of others. In I Samuel 25:32-35 we have another aspect of David’s gentleness. Nabal, a rich but rude farmer, refused to grant David and his soldiers the customary hospitality afforded to strangers. In anger, David vowed he would wipe out Nabal and his household. Before that vow could be fulfilled, Abigail, Nabal’s wife, had intervened with words of wisdom and won David’s favor.

To this wise woman David said, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand,” I Samuel 25:32, 33.

The Psalmist said, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head...,” Psalm 141:5.

In listing the attributes of true wisdom in James 3:17, James follows the word “gentle” by the words, “easy to be intreated.” “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,” James 3:17.

3. In refusing to take revenge. In I Samuel 30:11-14 David and his soldiers were on an excursion. When a group of Amalekites captured the town of Ziklag, where the families of David and his soldiers resided, the Amalekites took their wives and children as prisoners and then burned the town. In attempting to overtake them, David’s men found a servant of one of the Amalekite soldiers lying in the field sick and near death’s door. David could have easily ordered his execution on the spot, but

that is not how he treated the young man. David saw to it that the physical needs of the slave were looked after and then offered him the opportunity of serving him.

Here again is God's gentleness tempering David's fiery spirit and making him great.

4. In showing loving kindness and gratitude. In II Samuel 9 we find a beautiful picture of David's gentleness and greatness. On this occasion David could have mistreated others, but instead he lavished kindness upon them. The chapter begins with David asking if there were any left of the house of Saul that he may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake. Usually, in those days, the man who gained the throne slew all the descendants of the former king, but David did not take this course of action. Rather, for Jonathan's sake he wanted to manifest kindness to such. There was a little crippled fellow, Saul's grandchild, whose name was Mephibosheth. David sent for him and treated him as if he were his own son.
5. In refusing to silence his enemy. In II Samuel 16 we find David being made great by God's gift of gentleness at a time when he could have silenced one who was cursing him. Rather than allowing Abishai to slay Shimei, David permitted Shimei to go on cursing him. David accepted it as from the Lord.

As David was hurrying into exile, he was met by the stone-throwing Shimei, who shouted, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man," II Samuel 16:7, 8.

What charges! What accusation! No wonder Abishai told David that he would like to go over and cut off the head of Shimei, but David would not permit such an action. He was gentle. He left vengeance to the Lord.

Dr. John MacBeath tells us that Sir Walter Scott was ten years old when he heard John Wesley preach at Kelso, Scotland. During the service a drunken soldier interrupted the preacher with a coarse tongue. It was the gentleness of the preacher with the interrupter that impressed young Scott. Though he was firm and did not allow the interruption to continue, he nevertheless was obviously gentle, though frank. Young Scott wrote of gentleness later: "Gentle spirit, dwell with me. I myself will gentle be. Fill my nature from above, gracious tender Holy Dove."

II. THE GENTLENESS OF JESUS: (Teacher, have the class list some times and stories in the life of Christ when He manifested gentleness.) A few would be:

1. When He blessed the little children.
2. When He talked to the thief as He was dying on the cross.
3. When He cared for His mother as He was dying on the cross.
4. The washing of the disciples' feet in John 13.
5. His tender care for Thomas when he would not believe unless he saw the scars.
6. His forgiveness of Peter after he had denied Him.

Now, teacher, lead the class to discuss other instances of gentleness in the life of Christ.

CONCLUSION: Read very carefully the chapter on "gentleness" in Brother Hyles' book, *Blue Denim and Lace*. Use it to explain to the pupils what gentleness really is.