

"I'm tired
being nice."

I CHOOSE GENTLENESS...
NOTHING IS WON BY FORCE.
I CHOOSE TO BE GENTLE. IF I
RAISE MY VOICE MAY IT BE
ONLY IN PRAISE. IF I CLENCH
MY FIST, MAY IT BE ONLY IN
PRAYER. IF I MAKE A DEMAND,
MAY IT BE ONLY OF MYSELF.

Max Lucado

Gentleness

"Fruit of the Spirit and more. . ."

*"Be completely humble and gentle;
be patient, bearing with one another
in love. Make every effort to keep
the unity of the Spirit through the
bond of peace."*

Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV

Do you ever get tired of trying to be the nice guy? I do. Sometimes I want to say what I think even though it may offend someone. There are times when that is o.k., but it still needs to be said in a gentle way. Gentleness is translated various ways in the different versions of the Bible. Gentleness basically describes a temperament that is even-tempered, tranquil, unpretentious, and

meek. It is not a weak quality. It is characteristic of one who has power and strength under control. The Bible says it is a strong quality.

In THE MESSAGE, Eugene Peterson translates Paul's message to the Ephesians as *"In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences."* Ephesians 4:1-3

Being able to do this is quite a task for each of us, but it is doable with Christ as our leader. It doesn't mean just sitting around and not getting involved. It means getting involved in a positive way. There are often several ways to handle a particular person or situation. Handling that situation or talking with that person in a positive way often requires gentleness. It doesn't help if we offend the person. It doesn't help if we just make comments that "muddy the waters." Christ has given us many gifts. He has given us the gift of gentleness, but we have to accept it and then apply it to our daily lives. These characteristics are called "fruits of the Spirit" because they are the gifts given to us through Christ.

Often we think of gentleness and

Kindness is the language
which the deaf can hear and
the blind can see.

Mark Twain

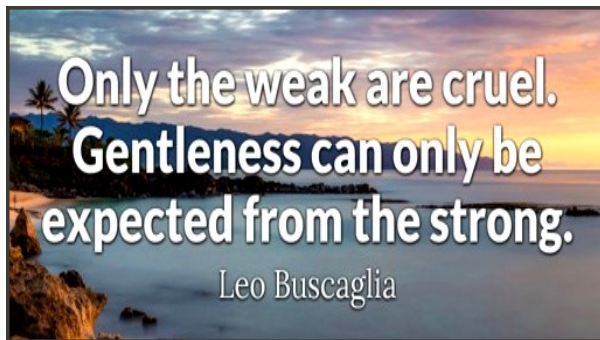
meekness as a "Caspar Milquetoast" personality. Caspar was a comic strip character who was thought of as a timid soul who was shy, timid and unassertive. That is not the reference here if we read it with an open mind. Gentleness as told to us in the Bible is a challenge to approach life and its challenges with a positive attitude. We are to live positively with strength in acts of love.

We can have this gentleness and control over our emotions if we are right with the Lord. Horatio Spafford wrote a well-known hymn "It is Well with my Soul" that tells of this glorious peace.

*"When peace, like a river,
attendeth my way, when sorrows
like sea billows roll; whatever my
lot, thou hast taught me to say, It
is well, it is well with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet,
though trials should come, let this
blest assurance control, that
Christ has regarded my helpless
estate, and hath shed his own
blood for my soul.*

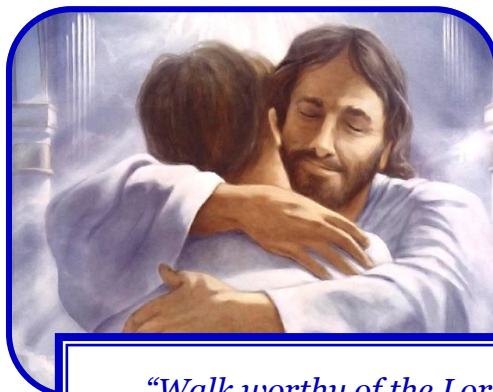
*My sin, oh, the bliss of this
glorious thought! My sin, not in
part but the whole, is nailed to the
cross, and I bear it no
more, praise the Lord, praise the
Lord, O my soul!*



It sounds so easy, but it is not always that easy when we are faced with people who don't see things our way! Gentleness seems so easy for some. But that does not mean they are weak. They are strong. It means they have satisfaction and are strong in their faith. Is being satisfied a wrong thing? Sometimes we call it laziness, but satisfaction with God brings peacefulness to us as an individual. It also brings a commitment. Paul didn't tell them to just believe and sit on their hands. He challenged them to get to work while he was in prison. There is a powerful anthem, copyright 1995 which has been sung by our choir and was written by Joseph Martin that reminds us of Paul's challenge to the people found in Colossians and Ephesians called "Walk Worthy".

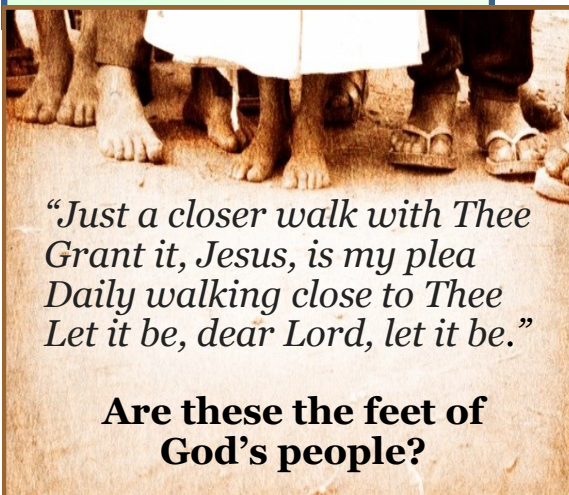
What does it mean to "Walk Worthy of the Lord?" Are we ever worthy of His love? Thankfully, God knows that we will never be worthy of His love without His forgiveness and grace. But the challenge is there for us each day.

Each day we are challenged to walk with the Lord and walk also with those who love the Lord. Sometimes we may not think we want to, but it is God's will and we must walk with others to be worthy to walk with our Lord.



*"Walk worthy of the Lord
Come give your heart to Christ
Live always bearing fruit for Him
Live strengthened by His might
Walk worthy of the Lord
All power to His name
Give Him glory
Give Him honor
Walk worthy of the Lord ."*

*"And, Lord, haste the day when
my faith shall be sight, the
clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound, and
the Lord shall descend, even so,
it is well with my soul."*



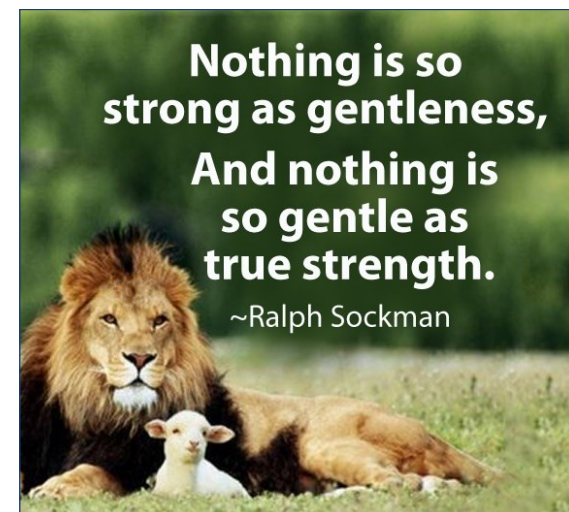
*"Just a closer walk with Thee
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea
Daily walking close to Thee
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be."*

**Are these the feet of
God's people?**

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gifts You have given us and yet we ask for more, and we don't always properly use the ones You have given to us. Please guide us each day that we will show Your love through the many gifts You have given to us and always help us to be humble and show that we are working to show Your kingdom on this earth through Your Spirit. Amen

1. Have you shown any gentleness to someone today? How?
2. What does "It is well with my soul" mean to you?
3. How can you be an active part in life today using gentleness in a particular situation or with a particular person?
4. The challenge to "make every effort" has to be done if we truly have the gift of gentleness. How can we do that?
5. Eugene Peterson encourages us to run and walk, and to mend fences. Does that require action on our part?

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**Nothing is so
strong as gentleness,
And nothing is
so gentle as
true strength.**

~Ralph Sockman