

Power Under Control

I remember a terrifying experience as if it were yesterday. My two kids were small and we were invited to a friend's farm to ride a horse. That sounds pretty fun and innocent, right? The first serious mistake I made was getting on this 6' tall, 1,000-pound beast that can run 30 mph. The very second I hit the saddle, he could sense my fear and trepidation. And then the unimaginable happened. He reared up like the Lone Ranger's horse Silver and took off in a full gallop. I froze in terror! Here I am held hostage on this massive out of control animal and all I could think of is, "Today I am going to die, right in front of my kids."



This story leads me to a topic that has convicted my heart. Paul said clearly in Ephesians 4:1-3, *"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and GENTLENESS, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

The world might interpret gentleness or meekness as cowardice, timidity or lack of strength. In actuality, gentleness is portrayed as a quiet, willing submission to God and others without the vengeful assertion we see in our society. It is used of a wild colt that had been tamed and whose power is channeled for useful purposes. It also describes someone who is tenderhearted, pleasant and mild in character. Simply, it is power under control. The horse that had me hostage was exercising its full power without any concern for my willingness to gain control. Gentleness would be a horse whose energy or power is under full control of its master. Even though gentleness is not valued in our society, it is crucial in our godliness and walk that Paul commands in Ephesians 4:1.

I know gentle people and they are amazing to watch. They have the ability to control their energies and strengths, but yet they have a very tough side. The gentle person submits themselves completely to God and only becomes angry over things that offend God . . . not themselves. If someone offends a gentle person, he does not get angry or seek to take revenge.

We know that Jesus is the greatest example of gentleness. Paul says this clearly in 2 Corinthians 10:1. Notice how he models gentleness, even though he has a tough side, *"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away!"* Jesus Himself said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matt 11:28-29) Did Jesus ever become angry? You better believe it! In Matthew 21:12-13 he became angry by driving out the money changers when they were defiling the temple for their own profit. Even though Jesus became angry when God was slandered, He neither retaliated against those who attacked Him at the cross. He was gentle. His power to take revenge was under control and He completely submitted to the will of His Father.

Primarily, I speak to my own heart here. In my human frailty as a pastor, I want to strike back or react in self-defense when someone criticizes me. I want to say, "How dare you. Do you know who I am?" The circus lion has the same strength as a lion running wild in Africa, but it has been tamed. The only time we should let the lion in us roar is when God's honor is at stake. I know you agree! I pray God will help each of us walk with all gentleness, so our godly character will draw others to Christ.

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . ." 1 Peter 3:15-16

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