

CLOSING EXHORTATIONS, PT. 2; PHIL. 4:5a (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING AT PAUL'S SIX CLOSING EXHORTATIONS IN Philippians, ~ chapter 4, ~ verses 4-9.

▶▶ Last time: ~ the 1st, ~ "Rejoice in the Lord always; ~ again I will say, ~ rejoice."

▷▷ Today, ~ we'll look at the second exhortation.

VERSE 5a ~ (LEB) "LET YOUR GENTLENESS ~ BE MADE KNOWN ~ TO ALL PEOPLE."

▶▶ This is one of those occasions in which I have to get a little technical with you for a few minutes.

▷▷ And you all are very gracious when I need to do this.

▷▷ As I believe I've noted before, ~ when you do expository preaching, ~ you can't avoid these times.

▷▷ And as a preacher of God's word, ~ I have a responsibility, ~ and I take this responsibility very seriously, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ I have a responsibility ~ to make sure you understand Scripture as fully as possible.

→→ So, ~ a little Greek lesson for you today.

▶▶ The Greek word behind ~ "gentleness," ~ in the command here in [verse 5a](#), ~ is a difficult word to translate ~ in order to capture the full meaning.

▷▷ Most likely that's why you see different words used in different translations. ~ Not that one is right or other is wrong.

▷▷ They just end up using different aspects of the word.

▷▷ They have to choose what they feel best reflects the Greek word.

▷▷ And context, ~ which always determines meaning, ~ is of little help here because there's not much context.

↳↳ Paul just gives us six rapid-fire exhortations here. ~ Trans. is hard. ¶¶ 1/10

▶▶ Ok, ~ back to the Greek word behind "gentleness."

▷▷ Based on my research, ~ though no single word is adequate, ~ the best translation, ~ seems to be "gentleness," ~ which is reflected in many translations and paraphrases.

↳↳ And that is how it's used in this very literal translation ~ that I use a good amount of the time now, ~ which was developed to work with the original languages.

▷▷ So in vs. 5a, ~ LEB ~ Paul's saying: ~ "Let your gentleness be made known to all people."

▶▶ And this is actually a command. ~~ I'll explain. ~~ Greek lesson continues.

▷▷ The form of the Greek verb shows that translators must use "let" in translation. ~~ This is easily confused in English ~ with a permissive idea.

↳↳ Someone might think ~ it implies ~ that this is a suggestion ~ or ~ something optional.

→→ For instance, ~ they might think it means, ~ "If you feel like it, ~ let your gentleness ~ be made known ~ to all people."

▷▷ But the Greek is stronger. ~~ It indicates that this is not something optional. ~~ It's not a suggestion ~ or a recommendation. ~~ The Greek text ~ shows it ~ to be a command.

↳↳ The idea here is, ~ "Your gentleness ~ must be made known ~ to all people."

→→ Or, ~ "I command you ~ to make your gentleness ~ known to all people."

↳↳ Or simply, ~ "Be gentle ~ toward all people."

▷▷ This means ~ that this is not something we can do ~ only if we feel like it. /~/ Whether we feel like it or not, ~ we are to be gentle ~ toward all people.

↳↳ The Bible's commands ~ take total precedence ~ over our feelings. ~~ And ~ to not be gentle toward all people ~ is sin.

▶▶ And that ~ ends our Greek lesson for today.

SO PAUL'S SECOND CLOSING EXHORTATION: ~~ "BE GENTLE ~ TOWARD ALL PEOPLE."

▶▶ Now, ~ we're going to split this up ~ into two categories. ~~ 1st, ~ we'll take ~ "Be gentle." ~~ And 2nd, ~ we'll focus on the phrase ~ "all people." ↴↴ 2/10

1st, ~ "BE GENTLE." ~ THE PEOPLE OF GOD ~ ARE TO BE A GENTLE PEOPLE.

GENTLENESS ~ IS ONE OF THE TRAITS ~ REQUIRED IN ELDERS.

▶▶ We see this ~ in Paul's list of qualifications for elders ~ in 1 Timothy, ~ chapter 3, ~ verses 1-7. ~ Homework.

WE CAN ALSO NOTE PAUL'S CHARGE TO TITUS IN TITUS, ~ CHAPTER 3, ~ VERSES 1-2.

▶▶ LEB, ~ "Remind them ~ to be subject to the rulers and to the authorities, ~ to obey, ~ to be prepared for every good work, ~ to speak evil of no one, ~ to be peaceable, ~ gentle, ~ showing all courtesy ~ to all people."

ADD TO THAT ~ PETER'S CHARGE TO WIVES IN 1 PETER, ~ CHAPTER 3, ~ VERSE 4.

▶▶ "but let your adorning ~ be the hidden person of the heart ~ with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, ~ which in God's sight ~ is very precious."

▶▶ We should mention here ~ that even though Peter is specifically speaking to wives, ~ in general, ~ a gentle and quiet spirit ~ in any believer ~ is very precious in God's sight.

NOW LET'S SPEND SOME TIME EXPLORING ~ THE OVERALL NT CONCEPT OF gentleness.

▶▶ As I understand it, ~ there are a couple of categories ~ of NT words ~ that are translated as ~ "gentleness" ~ and ~ "gentle."

▷▷ And ~ we can group them together ~ and get the big picture of gentleness ~ as presented in the NT.

OK, ~ AS A WHOLE, ~ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, ~ GENTLENESS ~ REFERS TO A gentleness of attitude and behavior, ~

in contrast ~ with harshness ~ in one's dealings with others.

▶▶ It is the opposite ~ of arrogance and self-assertiveness. ~ It stands opposed ~ to resentment ~ or revenge at injustices.

▷▷ And it involves ~ being selfless, ~ generous, ~ merciful, ~ courteous, ~ considerate, ~ and ~ being willing to waive one's own rights.

FURTHERMORE, ~ GENTLENESS IN THE NT DOES NOT SUGGEST TIMIDITY OR LACK OF courage, ~ or taking on a "doormat" personality, ~ allowing oneself to be trampled on. 📌 3/10

▶▶ Rather, ~ it refers to restrained or controlled strength, ~ i.e., ~ self control. ~ E.g., ~ to be gentle and polite in circumstances where it takes an effort to be gentle and polite.

▶▶ Apparently one of the Greek words for gentleness was used for a soothing medicine, ~ a colt that had been broken, ~ and a soft wind.

▷▷ In each case you have power, ~ but that power is under control.

▶▶ So in addition to what we've already said it means, ~ gentleness is also power or strength under control. ~ Or, ~ simply, ~ self-control.

▶▶ In Matthew, ~ chapter 11, ~ verse 29b, ~ Jesus said ~ that He is "gentle ~ and humble in heart."

▷▷ Isaiah, ~ chapter 40, ~ 11, ~ "He ~ [Jesus] ~ will tend his flock like a shepherd; ~ he will gather the lambs in his arms; ~ he will carry them in his bosom, ~ and gently lead those that are with young.

▷▷ Jesus is gentle. ~ But Jesus ~ is not weak.

▷▷ Obviously, ~ the One who called the universe into existence, ~ the one who "upholds it by the word of his power" ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and who, ~ in His earthly ministry, ~ drove the money changers from the temple, ~ is very far ~ from weak.

▶▶ Jesus, ~ being God, ~ is all-powerful. ~ But His omnipotence is totally under control. ~ We see this displayed in His suffering and in His death on the cross.

▷▷ In 1 Peter, ~ chapter 2, ~ verse 23a, ~ Peter writes, ~ "When he ~ [Jesus] ~ was reviled, ~ he did not revile in return."

↳↳ Jesus was verbally abused ~ throughout his trials and crucifixion.

→→ But, ~ no matter how many insults were thrown at Him, ~ He did not throw insults back at them. ~ In fact, ~ He accepted their insults ~ in silence.

▷▷ 1 Peter, ~ chapter 2, ~ verse 23b, ~ "when he ~ [Jesus] ~ suffered, ~ he did not threaten."

↳↳ Jesus was subjected to severe physical sufferings. ~ He was struck in the face, ~ spit on, ~ beaten, ~ crowned with thorns, ~ forced to carry His cross, ~ and crucified.

↪↪ Yet, ~ through it all ~ He never ~ threatened retaliation on His persecutors.

↪↪ From what I understand, ~ it was common in Jesus' time ~ for the one being executed ~ to cry out for vengeance ~ and to threaten his executioners.

→→ But, ~ Jesus did not do that.

↪↪ He could have. ~~ And He certainly had the power to back up any threats He made. ~~ He could have destroyed them just by using His powerful word.

↪↪ Instead, ~ He kept His absolute power under control ~ and forgave all of His persecutors and executioners.

▷▷ On the night Jesus was arrested, ~ remember what he said to Peter, ~ recorded in [Matthew, ~ chapter 26, ~ verse 53](#).

↪↪ "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, ~ and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

→→ But, ~ Jesus did not do that.

↪↪ As [Isaiah, ~ chapter 53, ~ verse 7](#), ~ says, ~

→→ "He was oppressed, ~~ and he was afflicted, ~~ yet ~ he opened not his mouth; ~~ like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, ~ and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, ~ so he opened not his mouth."

▶▶ As always, ~ Jesus provides a powerful example for his people to follow.

OK, ~ LET'S TRY TO SUMMARIZE ~ WHAT IT MEANS ~ TO BE GENTLE ACCORDING TO the NT.

▶▶ Just as Jesus exercised self-control, ~ we, ~ His blood-bought church, ~ are to exercise self-control in our dealings with others.

▷▷ We are to display a gentleness ~ in attitude and behavior ~ toward others. ~~ We are not ~ to be resentful ~ or seek retaliation at injustices.

↪↪ We're not to be arrogant ~ or self-assertive.

→→ And ~ we are to be courteous, ~ considerate, ~ selfless, ~ generous, ~ merciful, ~ and willing to waive our own rights ~ in our dealings with people. ↴ ↴ 5/10

▷▷ All of This is wrapped up in being gentle. ~ And ~ gentleness ~ is to be a guiding principle for our lives.

↳↳ IOW, ~ this is to be an ongoing thing. ~ Not once-in-awhile.

▶▶ Now, ~ someone might say, ~ "This is a pretty tall order, ~ not sure I could do this." ~ Or, ~ "How can I do this? ~ I'm just not that gentle.

▷▷ Well, ~ there's good news. ~ Over in Galatians, ~ Paul tells us that gentleness ~ is part of the fruit of the Spirit.

▷▷ Simply put, ~ when we walk by the Spirit, ~ which is another way of saying, ~ when we live according to God's word, ~ God the Holy Spirit ~ develops certain qualities within us.

↳↳ And one of those qualities is gentleness, ~ the way the NT describes it.

NOW OUR 2nd CATEGORY: ~ "ALL PEOPLE." ~ I.E., ~ BELIEVERS ARE TO BE GENTLE ~ toward all people.

NOW, ~ IT'S EASY ~ TO BE GENTLE WITH PEOPLE WE LIKE AND GET ALONG WITH.

▶▶ But we, ~ believers, ~ are to be gentle ~ toward people with whom we do not agree, ~ people who annoy us, ~ **people who are enemies of the cross, ~ people who are not easy to get along with.**

▷▷ The command is quite comprehensive. ~ We are to be gentle ~ toward everyone. ~ No one is left out of this command. ~ Not a soul is excluded in this exhortation.

▶▶ In our dealings with our fellow believers, ~ we are to be gentle.

▷▷ Paul makes this point in Ephesians, ~ chapter 4, ~ where he calls believers ~ to be humble, ~ gentle, ~ patient, ~ and tolerant ~ toward our fellow believers.

▶▶ In nurturing new believers, ~ we are to be gentle.

▷▷ In the context of the believers in Thessalonica coming to Christ, ~ Paul writes ~ in 1 Thessalonians, ~ chapter 2, ~ verse 7, ~~~ "But we ~ were gentle among you, ~ like a nursing mother taking care of her own children."

▶▶ In correcting a wayward believer, ~ we are to be gentle.

▷▷ Galatians, ~ chapter 6, ~ verse 1a, ~ NIV ~ "Brothers and sisters, ~ if someone is caught in a sin, ~ you who live by the Spirit ~ should restore that person gently." 📖 6/10

▶▶ In our dealings with those who oppose the gospel, ~ we are to be gentle.

▷▷ Now this is extremely important normally, ~ but even more so ~ with what's happening in this nation. ~~ We are being opposed more and more by the surrounding culture.

↪↪ And we are to be gentle no matter how fierce or widespread the opposition.

▷▷ In Luke, ~ chapter 6, ~ verse 27, ~ Jesus says, ~ LEB ~ "But to you who are listening ~ I say: ~~ Love your enemies, ~~ do good ~ to those who hate you."

▷▷ 2 Timothy, ~ chapter 2, ~ verses 24-25a. ~~ "And the Lord's servant ~ must not be quarrelsome ~ but kind to everyone, ~ able to teach, ~ patiently enduring evil, ~ correcting [who?] ~ his opponents ~ with [what?] ~ gentleness."

▷▷ And in Matthew, ~ chapter 5, ~ verse 45b, ~ Jesus says the Father "makes his sun rise on the evil ~ and on the good, ~ and sends rain ~ on the just ~ and on the unjust."

↪↪ God the Father is kind to all, ~ even the unjust.

▶▶ And when we are defending the faith, ~ we are to be gentle. ~~ 1 Peter, ~ chapter 3, ~ verses 14-15.

▷▷ "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, ~ you will be blessed. ~~ Have no fear of them, ~ nor be troubled, ~ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, ~ always being prepared ~ to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ~~ yet do it ~ with gentleness ~ and respect."

↪↪ Not harshly, ~ not insultingly, ~ no in a mocking manner.

↪↪ Be ready to defend the faith, ~ defend it when called upon to do so, ~ but do it in a gentle and respectful way.

→→ And I strongly suspect that we will gain a better hearing if we do so.

ON A DIFFERENT NOTE, ~ ONE THAT WE SHOULD MENTION HERE, ~ SOLOMON shows us some of the benefits ~ of being gentle toward everyone.

▶▶ Proverbs 15, ~ verse 1, ~ NIV, ~ "A gentle answer turns away wrath, ~ but a harsh word ~ stirs up anger."

▷▷ I.e., ~ "A gentle answer ~ turns away anger at its hottest. ~~ But a harsh word ~ makes tempers flare." ↯↯ 7/10

▷▷ Our speech ~ has the potential to quiet a riot ~ or to fan the embers of anger.

▷▷ The Hebrew word "gentle" here means soft, ~ tender, ~ or delicate. ~ Here the idea ~ is probably that of a conciliatory tone.

↳↳ We should be "gentle" in tone of voice, ~ terms chosen, ~ and non-verbal communications that accompany our speech.

▷▷ Harsh words ~ escalate any ill will ~ that may be already present.

↳↳ A "harsh word" here ~ is not simply one spoken with abrasiveness ~ or out of irritation, ~ but it is one designed ~ to wound the other person.

▷▷ So we see ~ that a gentle answer ~ may quench even white-hot anger, ~ while a harsh word ~ may fan a little huff into a raging fire.

↳↳ My . . . , ~ we are not, ~ by our words, ~ to fan a little huff into a raging fire.

▶▶ And Proverbs 25, ~ verse 15 says, ~ "With patience ~ a ruler may be persuaded, ~ and a soft tongue ~ [i.e., ~ soft speech] ~ will break a bone."

▷▷ The bones are the most rigid body parts inside of a person, ~ and fracturing the bones here ~ refers to breaking down the deepest, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ most hardened resistance to an idea a person may possess.

▷▷ IOW, ~ gentle speech, ~ as opposed to shouting ~ or screaming, ~ is very powerful.

↳↳ Solomon is saying ~ that gentle speech ~ can break down the deepest, ~ most hardened resistance ~ to an idea a person may possess.

BACK TO THE COMMAND TO BE GENTLE TOWARD EVERYONE.

▶▶ Although not explicit, ~ a part of Paul's purpose for this command to be gentle to all people ~ may be evangelistic.

▷▷ We can see that what Paul says here ~ is very similar to what Peter says in his first epistle ~ and what Jesus says in his sermon on the mount, ~ although Paul doesn't make it quite as clear.

▶▶ In 1 Peter, ~ chapter 2, ~ verse 12, ~ Peter says, ~ "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles [unbelievers] honorable, ~ so that ~ when they speak against you as evildoers, ~ they may see your good deeds ~ and glorify God on the day of visitation. ~ 2nd coming. ¶¶ 8/10

↪↪Peter calls us here ~ to always live properly among our unbelieving neighbors, ~ i.e., ~ to live among unbelievers ~ in a way ~ that brings honor and glory ~ to God.

▷▷We are to do so ~ for this purpose Peter says, ~ so that ~ when they accuse us of doing wrong ~ and speak against us, ~ ¶¶

↪↪they may see our godly lifestyle ~ "and glorify God on the day of visitation."

▷▷Peter's point ~ here in [verse 12](#) ~ is an evangelistic one. ~ His chief idea ~ is that in the midst of people speaking against us "as doing evil," ~ ¶¶

↪↪some unbelievers will become open to the gospel through the witness of our godly lifestyle, ~ come to Jesus for salvation, ~ ¶¶

→→and be there ~ to join in the celebration ~ when Jesus returns.

▶▶And in [Matthew](#), ~ [chapter 5](#), ~ [verse 16](#), ~ Jesus says, ~ ¶¶

▷▷"In the same way, ~ let your light shine before others, ~ [and here's why] ~ so that they may see your good works ~ and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

↪↪Note that the principal purpose of this command is evangelistic.

→→Again, ~ our godly lifestyle will prompt some unbelievers to be open to the gospel ~ and then be saved.

▶▶Also, ~ recall back in [Philippians](#), ~ [chapter 2](#), ~ [verses 14-15](#), ~ that Paul said, ~

▷▷"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ~ that you may be blameless and innocent, ~ children of God without blemish ~ in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, ~ among whom ~ you shine as lights in the world."

▷▷Remember the wider context of [Phil. 2:14-18](#), ~ how believers are to conduct themselves in the midst of unbelievers.

▷▷We noted that it's likely that Paul had been thinking evangelistically here, ~ ¶¶

↪↪in his concern that believers live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God in this present evil age.

▷▷IOW my . . . , ~ when we live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God in this present evil age, ~ some unbelievers will be attracted to Jesus ~ and then be saved.

▶▶ And coming back to the exhortation to be gentle toward all people, ~ in [Phil.](#), ~ [chapter 4](#), ~ [verse 5a](#), ~ it's very likely here as well ~ that a part of Paul's thinking is evangelistic.

▷▷ IOW, ~ our gentleness ~ may prompt some unbelievers to become open to the gospel ~ and then be saved.

▶▶ Now, ~ when we add all of this up, ~ we see that the NT teaches ~ lifestyle evangelism.

▷▷ Plainly, ~ we see that our lifestyle ~ is tied up ~ in our evangelism.

↪↪ So, ~ my . . . , ~ perhaps we should ask ourselves a very serious question: ~ How good an evangelist ~ is my lifestyle?

→→ To ask it differently, ~ "Is my lifestyle ~ one that would prompt some unbelievers ~ to be open to the gospel ~ and then be saved?"

▶▶ Now, ~ it's important to understand ~ that lifestyle evangelism only goes so far. ~ As Paul says, ~ "[faith comes from hearing the Good News about Christ.](#)" (Rom. 10)

▷▷ A godly lifestyle can attract unbelievers to Jesus, ~ but at some point ~ the gospel must be spoken.

↪↪ Because the gospel is the power of God at work, ~ saving everyone who believes.

→→ As Paul says in [Romans](#), ~ [chapter 1](#), ~ [verse 16a](#), ~ "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, ~ [why?] ~ because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes."

▶▶ But never underestimate the power of a godly life.

▷▷ Specifically, ~ in the context of our message today, ~ Paul's second exhortation, ~ never underestimate the power ~ of being gentle toward unbelievers.

↪↪ It may just open the door for us to share the gospel.

CONCLUSION.

PAUL EXHORTS US: ~ BE GENTLE ~ TOWARD EVERYONE, ~ 77

▶▶ believers ~ and unbelievers alike.

LET'S PRAY 10/10