

Blessed Are The Meek

Matthew 5:5

JESUS USED PARADOX AS A TEACHING TOOL

1. The last will be first. *Matthew 20:16*
2. It is better to give than to receive. *Acts 20:35*
3. Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. *Luke 9:24*
4. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live. *John 11:25*
5. The greatest among you shall be your servant. *Matthew 23:11*
6. My strength is made perfect in weakness. *2 Corinthians 12:9*
7. The meek shall inherit the earth. *Matthew 5:5*

Jesus often used paradoxical statements to grab the attention of His hearers. To say, “Blessed are the strong and proud for they shall inherit the earth,” sounds somewhat natural. But to say, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” is antithetical to human reasoning. Jesus isn’t teaching the survival of the fittest, but survival of the meekest.

HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND MEEKNESS

As with our previous studies, we want to make sure that we understand the meaning of Jesus’ words. Words are important because they are what God uses to communicate truth. Let’s build our understanding of meekness by looking first at what it’s not:

1. Meekness is not weakness, cowardice, or timidity.
2. Meekness is not indecisiveness, wishy-washiness, or a lack of confidence.
3. Meekness is not shyness or a description of an introverted personality.
4. Meekness is not simply niceness.

The Greek word that is translated “meek” has the idea of gentleness, kindness, mildness, and benevolence. It was sometimes used to describe a soothing medicine or a soft breeze. It was also used to describe colts and other animals whose naturally wild spirits were broken by a trainer so that they could do useful work. As a human attitude, it means being gentle in spirit, submissive, quiet, and tenderhearted. It is most often used in the Bible to describe a subservient and trusting attitude before God. Meekness, therefore, is to be understood as a vertical virtue before it is understood as a horizontal virtue. It is first and foremost the characteristic that makes a man bow low before God. It is the characteristic that drives a man to humbly trust God in every circumstance. Let’s look at this in Psalm 37.

In the Third Beatitude Jesus alludes back to Psalm 37. Psalm 37 recounts the fact that though Israel lived in the land, they didn't possess it because of the wickedness of evil men. In Psalm 13:11, after Israel is told to "fret not" (v. 1), "trust in the Lord" (v.3), "delight yourself in the Lord" (v.4), "commit your way to the Lord" (v.5), "be still before the Lord" (v. 7), and "refrain from anger" (v. 8), David says, "But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace." So we should understand meekness as an attitude of trust and humble reliance on God. With that framework, what does God's Word have to say about meekness?

WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT MEEKNESS

1. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22–23*

2. Meekness is to characterize our response to God's Word.

*Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with **meekness** the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:20–21*

3. We are to share our faith with meekness.

*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, 1 Peter 3:15*

4. A spirit of meekness is to characterize our relationships within the body of Christ.

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, **meekness**, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:12–13*

5. We are to help a brother caught in sin with meekness.

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of **gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Galatians 6:1*

6. We are to respond to those who oppose God's Word with a meek spirit.

*Correcting his opponents with **gentleness**. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 2 Timothy 2:25*

JESUS' MEEKNESS

Jesus speaking of Himself said, "I am gentle and lowly of heart" (Matthew 11:29). Let's first look at Jesus' humble response to mistreatment. He never responded in a retaliatory or vindictive manner. He was meek and mild, but very much in control.

1. When Judas kissed Him in Gethsemane, Jesus called him a friend. *Matt. 26:47-50*
2. When Jesus' friends betrayed Him and fled, He uttered no reproach. *Matt. 26:56*
3. When Jesus was mocked and spit on, He uttered not a word. *Matt 26:67, 27:30-31*
4. When Jesus was confronted by Pilate, He kept silent. *Matt. 27:11-14*
5. When Peter denied Him, Jesus restored him to fellowship and service. *Jn. 21:15-19*
6. At His death, Jesus pleaded, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. *Lk. 23:34*

But when it came to matters of faith Jesus was a lion.

1. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees hardness of heart when He healed a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. *Matt. 12:9-45*
2. Jesus was angered when His disciples tried to prevent little children from coming to Him. *Mk. 10:13-16*
3. Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple with a whip. *Jn. 2:14-17*
4. Jesus called Peter "Satan" when he tried to deter Him from His heavenly mission. *Matt. 16:21-23*

What do we learn from all of these instances? We learn that meekness has three very distinct facets:

1. A meek man or woman has a deep-rooted trust in God.
When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. *1 Peter 2:23*
2. Far from being weakness, cowardice, or timidity, a meek person possesses immense strength and self-control when treated unjustly.
3. A meek person stands up fearlessly in defense of the truth and others.

ARE WE GROWING IN MEEKNESS

It goes without saying that our meekness is imperfect, but we should be seeking growth towards this attitude of Christ. After all, as believers we are being conformed into His image (*Romans 8:29*). There are four heart attitudes that we need to be watchful for:

1. Harshness - If there is an absence of gentleness in your treatment of others.
2. Grasping – If you care little about how your actions affect others.
3. Vengefulness – If you feel like you have to settle the score.
4. Lack of control – If you learn towards an explosiveness.

If a gentle spirit is not at least imperfectly present in your life, if it is not at least budding or beginning to flower, it is possible that you may have never experience a true poverty of spirit before the Lord. Practically, to grow in meekness:

1. We must realize that a gentle spirit is a gift of the Holy Spirit and comes only through grace.
2. We must yoke ourselves to Jesus who is the incarnation of meekness.
3. We must pay close attention to the progression of the first three Beatitudes as they clearly mark out the path to meekness.
 - A. Poverty of spirit – I am spiritually bankrupt and have nothing intrinsically within myself that is commendable to God.
 - B. Brokenness over sin – I see my sin and the sin of the world around me as an affront to God’s glory and am humbly broken. Wretched man am I! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - C. Meekness – A gentle and mild-temperedness in light of God’s grace towards us.

The test of true meekness is not whether we can say we are poor sinners, but rather how we respond when someone else reminds you that you are a poor sinner.

THE REWARD FOR MEEKNESS

The reward for the meek is grand! Jesus said, “Blessed are them meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” A helpful translation of the third Beatitude might be, “Blessed are those who are humbly submissive to God and courageously gentle towards others, for they, and they only, shall rule and reign with Christ when His earthly Kingdom comes.”

We again see logical sequence and progression in the Beatitudes. Poverty of spirit (the first) results in mourning (the second). Meekness (the third) results in hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Being poor in spirit causes us to turn away from ourselves in mourning, and meekness causes us to turn toward God in seeking His righteousness.