

Blessed Are the Meek

Matthew 5:5

Tonight, we come to one of the most overlooked and misunderstood of the beatitudes. The first two beatitudes are familiar to every true Christian. We have an intuitive sense of the necessity and value of confession and contrition. If you are a child of God, you have almost certainly prayed for these things: "Lord, show me the reality of my sin, help me to grieve and hate my sin."

But we don't tend to pray for meekness. We aren't familiar with the concept and don't really have a sense of its significance.

That is partly due to the culture in which we live. The spirit of our age does not exalt or value meekness, but the opposite. Blessed are the bold, the determined, and the strong. Blessed are those who believe in themselves, who listen to their heart and pursue their dream. It's the theme song to nearly every Disney movie. You can look it up.

So we have some work to do. What exactly does it mean to be meek? Why does God delight in it so? What is the blessedness that it brings?

I. The Meaning of Meekness

A. Definition

What does meekness mean? What does it look like? One dictionary defines it this way:

1. *mild: showing mildness or quietness of nature*
2. *cowed: showing submissiveness and lack of initiative or will*

Grab a thesaurus and you'll find these synonyms: *passive, timid, docile, lily-livered*. Is this what Jesus has in mind? "Blessed are the mild, the cowed, the timid, and the lily-livered"? Doesn't sound quite right, does it? Thank goodness that's not the Biblical definition! Meekness is a magnificent characteristic of those who are being formed by the loving reality of God.

Boys and girls, do you know how diamonds are made? Diamonds are created under a very specific range of temperature and pressure. That can happen deep in the ground (about 90 miles) or by the impact of an asteroid. That unique combination of heat and pressure transforms a rock into a beautiful jewel that radiates light.

Well, the diamond of meekness is also formed under a specific heat and pressure – the pressure of the reality of God as God in all his words and works. When properly applied upon

the dull rock of our heart, the result is a transformed heart from which the light of God shines out and blesses others.

Sinclair Ferguson: “Meekness is that facet of Christian spirituality which describes a man or woman who has been humbled under the authority of God's word, submitted to the purposes of God's providence, and in whom has been created a spirit of gentleness and grace towards others.”

In other words, Christian meekness is formed in the presence of God and reveals itself in the presence of others. And it requires that order.

- In relation to God, meekness reverences God’s word and submits to God’s providences.
- In relation to others, it displays gentleness – not primarily as a personality trait, but as a spiritual gift, a spiritual ability and desire. People who pay attention to God's word and trust God’s providences will find welling up within them a gentle, patient spirit towards others.

B. Examples

Meekness is best understood when it is seen in action, and the Bible gives us several noteworthy examples of this.

Moses

In Numbers 12:3 we are told that “Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”

For those of you who are familiar with Moses, “meek” might not be the first word that comes to mind. But according to Scripture he was not only meek, but the meekest man on the face of the earth! And if we understand the term correctly, it is easy to see why. Moses, more than any other person on earth, was a man exposed to and formed by the word and will of the living God.

- Moses was visited by God in the burning bush.
- He was God’s spokesman in God’s war with Pharaoh.
- He met with God on Mount Sinai and received the law of God.
- He pronounced God's judgment on those who broke that law.

Moses was a man uniquely defined and formed by the sovereign presence, purposes and power of God. He was meek as a man because he was keenly aware of the word and will of

God. But it is precisely this willing submission to the word and will of God that enabled him to lead God's people. (And remember, he learned meekness the hard way!)

Job

Another powerful example of a man who was mighty in meekness was Job. Job was a godly man and when the Lord allowed the Devil to destroy his family, his home, and his health, Job submitted to the providence of his God. "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Jesus

Of course, the supreme example of meekness is found in our Lord. Sinclair Ferguson makes the point that there is only one personal characteristic in the life of Jesus to which he ever drew attention in himself: "I am meek and lowly in heart" (see Matt. 11:29).

Jesus was perfectly formed according to the reality of his Father in heaven. His life was molded perfectly by the words and will of his Father – even unto death on a cross. And out of that flowed the fruit of gentleness and grace towards the lost sheep of Israel. He loved people because he loved his Father. Though he possessed all the power of heaven in his hand, he was meek in that he embraced his calling to love and serve the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. His meat was to do the Father's will. His meekness was his fierce determination to glorify his God through glad obedience, even to the point of dying on the cross.

And the evidence of His radical God-centeredness was a profound compassion and gentleness with men! The word "meek" is often translated as "gentle."

Matt. 11:29 *Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden for I am gentle and lowly in heart.*

His deep, sacrificial compassion for men flowed from his deep concern for God. And that is the model for all those who profess to follow Him.

Paul

2 Cor. 10:1 *I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.*

Meekness is produced as we see ourselves in light of the reality of God, but it is lived out in the presence of men. It is rooted in our relationship with God but bears fruit in the world of human relationships.

II. The Practice of Meekness

What will meekness look like in real life?

Eph. 4:2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (NIV)*

Those who are being formed by the word of God and trust in the providences of God are being freed from pride and the nasty impatience that goes with it. The humility, gentleness, and patience Jesus has shown to them begins to flow out of them to others. Meekness is in the middle of gospel clothing! **Peter** calls to women to focus not on external beauty, which is pleasing to men, but the inner beauty of a “quiet and gentle spirit” which is pleasing to God (see 1 Peter 3:4).

Col. 3:12–13 *Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing 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.*

Meekness is formed within us as we relate to others according to how Jesus relates to us.

It expresses itself in gentleness with those who disagree with us.

2 Tim. 2:24 *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be **gentle** to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,*

In an age of outrage, God’s people should shine as we “in humility [correct] those who are in opposition.”

That’s a bit convicting isn’t it? When it comes to disagreements people usually resort to either fight or flight – either be a combatant or just avoid conflict all together.

Meekness does neither; it engages in the issue but with a strong humility and bold gentleness rooted in the knowledge that God alone is always right, and God alone can teach people the truth. The disagreement isn’t about us – it’s about him.

Meekness Looks Like Love

1. Love for God.

2. Love for sinful people – the only kind there are. It is a gentle, humble response when people hurt you, frustrate you, or deeply disappoint you. When your voice rises in anger, you

have forgotten meekness. When the wounds of others produce bitterness or self-pity, you've bypassed meekness. You are no longer seeing yourself in the light of God's glory and grace. When you are harsh and accusatory towards others you are ignoring meekness. You don't get to be harsh just because you are hurt. You aren't allowed to get angry just because you are convinced you are right.

III. The Blessing of Meekness

"They shall inherit the earth."

Those who were listening to Jesus would have immediately recognized that he was quoting from a psalm, Psalm 37. Psalm 37 is a lesson in meekness, a contrast between those who live for themselves, promoting themselves, and those who live waiting upon and trusting in the Lord.

Psalm 37:1–2

- ¹ *Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!*
- ² *For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.*

A series of commands in verses 3-7:

- 37:3 – Trust in the LORD and do good
- 37:4 - Delight yourself in the LORD
- 37:5 – Commit your way to the LORD, trust in him
- 37:7 – Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him

Psalm 37:9–11, 22

- ⁹ *For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.*
- ¹⁰ *In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.*
- ¹¹ ***But the meek shall inherit the land
and delight themselves in abundant peace.***
- ²² ***for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land,
but those cursed by him shall be cut off.***

Every Jewish person would understand "the land" to mean the Promised Land. The meek will thrive and flourish in Israel. God will richly bless them in the land he had given to them.

But Jesus quotes the phrase with a little twist, promising the meek not only the land, but the earth – the whole earth. Those who are formed by the presence and reality of God will reveal that in godly gentleness, and they shall inherit the whole world!

How?

1. **Providentially** – God does bless those who are molded by his presence and word. He cares for his own.

Psalm 37:25 *I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.*

God really works out everything for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose (see Rom. 8:28).

2. **Redemptively** – when we come to faith in Christ, we become heirs of all that belongs to Christ!

a. *Already: 1 Cor. 3:21–23* So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

b. *Future: Luke 12:32* Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

A day is coming when the kingdom of God will be revealed in all of its glory in a new heaven and a new earth. The meek shall inherit that. Those who bear the marks of Christ, following Christ, finding their life in Christ, shall reign with Christ. Blessed are the meek, the gentle, those who serve Christ with humble hearts. They shall be exalted. Why? Because Christ was meek unto death. Because of his glorious humility he has been exalted to the right hand of God, and so shall we. Amen.