



Ministry of the Word

Wednesday 17th June 2020

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Scripture: Matthew 5:5

Subject: Part 17 – The Meek Shall Inherit

Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

I am sure you have recognised the value in studying these beatitudes separately. On account of the fact that so many, even believers have misunderstood them, or have not really given them much attention. Surprisingly, we don't seem to understand that they are foundational truths of the Kingdom, and perhaps give even less attention to their application in our lives. They are very "contrary" to modern culture which often sways the believer to conform to current trends, rather than keep on the biblical narrow path. This is not a new dilemma. In fact the account of Daniel chapter one is a remarkable example of it. You recall that Daniel resisted firstly to eat the King's diet, which of course was offered to idols and he then to Babylonian culture. Often, it's the simple things that are lost amiss the more outstanding accounts such as the 'Lion's Den'. Daniel had to battle to the point of death for his beliefs, principles, and ethics. Today, many are ready to jettison their beliefs, principles and ethics in order to accommodate a world that has no interest in living to the standards of the King. It is God's standards that brings life not death. It is God's rule that brings order not chaos, the world needs to change, not God's church.

This beatitude is not one of those that would find favour in our world today. The strong "loner" who is able to run over any and every one that gets in the way, is admired. The proud inherit the earth. The rich and the strong and the mighty seize the planet and its resources!

The clever and the self-confident are the ones fit to rule! In this fallen world self-sufficiency is a virtue and meekness a vice! *So what is this beatitude about, and how do we understand it so that we can apply it to our lives?*

When looking at the historical facts in relation to the Jews in the time of Christ, please don't disassociate your attitude from theirs, by saying "well, we would not do this", in fact we need to be careful that we don't. Though believers are not Jews, we can draw some parallels in found behaviours. Jesus' audience knew how to act spiritually proud and spiritually self-sufficient. They were proficient in creating a pious facade. They actually believed that the Messiah was coming soon and would commend them for their goodness. He would, at last, give the Jewish people their rightful place in the world; a position above all other people, because they were the chosen of God.

They eagerly anticipated that the Messiah would deal gently with them and harshly with their oppressors, who for nearly a hundred years at that time, had been the Romans. After the Maccabean revolution that freed them from the Greeks, the Jews had a brief time of independence. But Rome's rule, though not as cruel and destructive, was much more powerful than that of Greece. From 63 B.C., when Pompey annexed Palestine to Rome, the region had been ruled primarily by puppet kings of the Herodian family and by Roman governors, and the best known to us was Pilate. The Jews so despised Roman oppression that sometimes tried to deny that they were under their rule. Yet throughout this time, and even before that, the Jews while having their own take on politics and hope for independence which they regarded as promised to them by God, the majority of them became more entrenched with religious tradition, and Jewish culture, which led those people to forsake the Word of God. *Is that what's happening today?*

I know those who have tremendous knowledge of current religious trends to the point that they became involved in ministry but they don't have any real understanding of what Jesus is teaching concerning the Kingdom. We have to be guided and guarded with the Scriptures, remember '*what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul*'.

So let's turn our attention to verse 5.

Let's begin with defining this word "meek". It comes from the Greek word '*praus*' (pros) and it means '*to be gentle, humble, considerate, and courteous*'. These qualities need self-control (*some times more than others!*) in order for them to be manifested. These qualities are not just for the few but for all the people in the kingdom of God. They distinguish the child of God from those in the world, because they have a personal relationship with the King. The priority of the child of God is to please Him more than anyone else, and to live in the assurances that He has given them. The word can also mean mild or soft in such context of describing a soothing medicine or a soft breeze. It was used of 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 of spirit, submissive, quiet, and tender hearted.

During His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was hailed as the coming King, though He was "*gentle, and mounted on a donkey*" (Matthew 21:5). Paul lovingly referred to the meekness and gentleness of Christ in 2 Corinthians 10:1 as the pattern for his own attitude.

The essential difference between being poor in spirit and being meek, or gentle, is that poverty in spirit focuses on our sinfulness before God, whereas meekness focuses on God's holiness. The basic attitude of humility underlies both virtues. When we look honestly at ourselves, we are made humble by seeing how sinful and unworthy we are; when we look at God, we are made humble by seeing how righteous and worthy He is.

We can see a logical sequence and progression in the Beatitudes. Poverty of spirit acknowledges who we are before God, which results in mourning that leads to repentance, and then Meekness, we become subjected to God and our hearts have changed. The blessings of the Beatitudes are for those who are realistic about their sinfulness, who are repentant of their sins, and who are responsive to God in His righteousness. Those who are unblessed, unhappy, and shut out of the kingdom are the proud, the arrogant, the unrepentant, the self-sufficient and self-righteous who see in themselves no unworthiness and feel no need for God's help and God's righteousness.

Most of Jesus' hearers, like fallen men throughout history, were concerned about justifying their own ways, defending their own rights, and serving their own ends. The way of meekness was not their way, and therefore the true kingdom was not their kingdom. The proud

Pharisees wanted a miraculous kingdom, the proud Sadducees wanted a materialistic kingdom, the proud Essenes wanted a monastic kingdom, and the proud Zealots wanted a military kingdom. But to the humble, Jesus offered the kingdom.

Meekness has always been God's way for man. It is the way of the Old Testament. In the book of Job, chapter 5 verse 11, we are told that God

“sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety”

In Numbers Chapter 12 v 3 we are told that Moses, the Jews' great deliverer and law-giver,

“was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth”

The great King David, the supreme military hero, wrote in Psalm 25 v 9

“He [the Lord] leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way”

Meekness is the way of the New Testament. It is taught by Jesus in the Beatitudes as well as elsewhere and is continued to be taught by the apostles.

Paul entreated the Ephesians in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 and 2 to

“walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love”

He told the Colossians in Colossians chapter 3 v 12 to

“put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

He told Titus in Titus chapter 3 verse 1 and 2 to remind those under his leadership

“to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”

Meekness does not mean weakness. The word was used in much extra-biblical literature to refer to the breaking of an animal. Meekness means power put under control. Proverbs chapter 25 verse 28 tells us that a person without meekness is *“like a city that is broken into and without walls”*. And in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 32 we are told that

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.”

An unbroken colt is useless; medicine that is too strong will harm rather than cure; a wind out of control destroys. Emotions out of control also destroys, and has no place in God's kingdom. Meekness uses its resources appropriately.

Meekness is the opposite of violence and vengeance. The meek person, for example, accepts joyfully the seizing of his property by godless authorities on account of his faith, knowing that he has infinitely better and more permanent possessions awaiting him in heaven (Hebrews 10:34). The meek person exercises patience, self-control; not easily provoked. *"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle with all men, apt to teach, patient"* (2 Timothy 2:24). The meek person is quick to forgive, not looking for revenge. *"Forgive men their trespasses, as your heavenly Father forgives you"* (Mark 6:14). The meek person is quiet; that is studies to be quiet—*"stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still"* (Psalm 4:4). Quiet and surrendered before God; quiet before men; controlled in speech and behaviour.

The meek person has died to self, and he therefore does not worry about injury to himself, or about loss, insult, or abuse. The meek person does not revenge, first of all because the Lord commanded this as we see in Romans 12 verse 19 -

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."

Being poor in spirit and having mourned over his great sinfulness, the gentle person stands humbly before God, knowing he has nothing to commend himself. It is the opposite of undisciplined. Meek means trust with confidence. It is the opposite of personal pride.

Meekness is not cowardice or emotional softness. It is not lack of conviction, confidence nor it is mere human niceness. But it is courage, it is strength, it's conviction, it's confidence that comes from God, not from self. The spirit of meekness is the spirit of Christ, who defended the glory of His Father, but gave Himself in sacrifice for others. Leaving an example for us to follow Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 23 that, He who

"committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

Though He was sinless, and therefore never deserved criticism or abuse, Jesus did not resist slander or repay injustice or threaten His tormentors. The only human being who did no wrong, the One who always had a perfect defence, never defended Himself.

When His Father's house was profaned by money changers and sacrifice sellers, John tells us in John chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 that

“He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables.”

Jesus repeatedly denounced the hypocritical and wicked religious leaders firmly. He cleansed the Temple by force; and He fearlessly uttered divine judgment on those who forsook and corrupted God's Word. But Jesus did not once raise a finger or give a single retort in His own defence. Even though at any time He could have called legions of angels to His side (Matthew 26:53), He refused to use either natural or supernatural power for His own welfare. Meekness is not weakness, but meekness does not use its power for its own defence or selfish purposes. Meekness is power completely surrendered to God's control.

What does the Manifestation of Meekness look like?

The best way to describe meekness is to see it in action. Scripture abounds with instructive accounts of meekness.

After God had called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans to the Promised Land and had made the marvellous unconditional covenant with him, a dispute about grazing lands arose between the servants of Abraham and those of his nephew Lot. All the land of Canaan had been promised to Abraham. He was God's chosen man and the Father of God's chosen people. Lot, on the other hand, was largely dependent on Abraham for his welfare and safety. Besides that, Abraham was Lot's uncle and his elder. Yet, Abraham willingly let Lot take whatever land he wanted, by giving up his rights and prerogatives for the sake of his nephew, for the sake of harmony between their households, and for the sake of their testimony before

“the Canaanite and the Perizzite [who] were dwelling then in the land” (Genesis 13:5-9).

Those things were much more important to Abraham than standing up for his own rights. He had both the right and the power to do as he pleased in the matter, but in meekness he gladly waived his rights and laid aside his power.

Joseph was abused by his jealous brothers and eventually sold into slavery. When, by God's gracious plan, he came to be second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, he was in a position to take severe vengeance on his brothers. When they came to Egypt asking for grain for their starving families, Joseph could easily have refused and, in fact, could have put his brothers into more severe slavery than he experienced. Yet, he had only forgiveness and love for them. When he finally revealed to them who he was, *"he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it"* (Genesis 45:2). Then he said to them, *"Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.... Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God"* (w. 5,8). Later he told them, *"Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive"* (50:19-20). In meekness Joseph understood that it was God's place to judge and his to forgive and help.

What about Moses? Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating some Hebrew slaves; faced up to Pharaoh to demand the release of his people; and was so angry at the orgy that Aaron and the people were having around the golden calf that he smashed the first set of tablets of the Ten Commandments. Yet he was called *"very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth"* (Numbers 12:3). Moses vented his anger against those who harmed and enslaved his people and who rebelled against God, but he did not vent his anger against those who abused him or demand personal rights and privileges. When God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses felt completely inadequate, and pleaded, *"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11). After God explained His plan for Moses to confront Pharaoh, Moses again pleaded, *"Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue"* (4:10). Moses would defend God before anyone, but he did not defend himself before God.

David was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as Israel's king. But when, in the cave of Engedi, he had the opportunity to take Saul's life, as Saul often had tried to take

his, David refused to do so. He had such great respect for the king's office, despite that particular king's wickedness and abuse of him, that

“David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. So he said to his men, ‘Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord’s anointed’” (1 Samuel 24:5-6).

Many years later, after David's rebellious son Absalom had routed his father from Jerusalem, a member of Saul's family named Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him. When one of David's soldiers wanted to cut off Shimei's head, David prevented him, saying,

“Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now is this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him. Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day” (2 Samuel 16:5-12).

By contrast, King Uzziah, who began to reign at the age of sixteen and who *“did right in the sight of the Lord,”* and *“continued to seek God”* (2 Chronicles 26:4-5), became self-confident after the Lord gave him great victories over the Philistines, Ammonites, and other enemies.

“When he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (v. 16).

Uzziah thought he could do no wrong, and arrogantly performed a rite that he knew was restricted to the priests. He was so concerned with exalting himself and glorying in his greatness, that he disobeyed the God who had made him great and even profaned His Temple. As a consequence *“King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord”* (v. 21).

Of the many examples of meekness in the New Testament, the greatest other than Jesus Himself was Paul. He was by far the most educated of the apostles and the one, as far as we can tell, that God used most widely and effectively. Yet he refused to put any confidence in himself, *“in the flesh”* (Philippians 3:3). He knew that he could do all things, but only *“through Him who strengthens me”* Philippians 4:13.

Why is there the Necessity for Meekness?

Meekness is necessary first of all because it is required for salvation. Only the meek will inherit the earth, because only the meek will submit to the King and His rule. *“For the Lord takes delight in His people,” says the psalmist; “he crowns the humble with salvation”* (Psalm 149:4, NIV).

When the disciples asked Jesus who was the greatest in the kingdom,

“He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’” (Matthew 18:2-4).

Meekness is also necessary because it is commanded.

“Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility” (Zeph. 2:3).

James commands believers in James chapter 1 verse 21,

“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”

Those who do not have a humble spirit are not able even to listen rightly to God’s Word, much less understand and receive it. Meekness is necessary because we cannot witness effectively without it. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15: *“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”*

Pride will always stand between our testimony and those to whom we testify. They will see us instead of the Lord, no matter how orthodox our theology or how refined our technique. Meekness is necessary because only meekness gives glory to God. Pride seeks its own glory, but meekness seeks God’s. Meekness is reflected in our attitude towards other children of God. Humility in relation to fellow Christians gives God glory as we are reminded in Romans 15 verses 5 to 7.

“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God”

The Result of Meekness

As with the other beatitudes, the general result of meekness is being blessed, being made divinely happy. God gives the meek His own joy and gladness. More specifically, the gentle or the meek shall inherit the earth.

After creating man in His own image, God gave man dominion over the whole earth (Genesis 1:28). The subjects of His kingdom are going to come someday into that promised inheritance, which was largely lost and perverted after the Fall. In the New Testament that place includes “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13). The believer in Jesus will inherit a new heaven and a new earth. God will have complete domain over them, and those who have become His children through faith in His Son will rule that domain with Him. The only ones who become His children and the subjects of His divine kingdom are those who are gentle, those who are meek, because they understand their unworthiness and sinfulness, and cast themselves on the mercy of God, subjecting themselves to God and His rule. The emphatic pronoun *autos* (they) is again used, which we’ve already seen in verses 3 and 4 of this chapter, indicates that only those who are meek shall inherit the earth.

Most Jews thought that the coming great kingdom of the Messiah would belong to the strong, of whom the Jews would be the strongest. But the Messiah Himself said that it would belong to the meek, and to Jew and Gentile alike.

The Greek word *Kleronomeo* which means to inherit, refers to the receiving of one’s allotted portion, one’s rightful inheritance. This beatitude is almost a direct quotation of Psalm 37:11 which says *“But the humble will inherit the land.”*

For many generations faithful Jews had wondered, as God’s people today sometimes wonder, why the wicked and godless seem to prosper and the righteous and godly seem to suffer. Through David, God assured His people,

“Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be there” (v. 10).

The wicked person's time of judgment is coming, so to the righteous person's time of blessing. Our responsibility is to trust the Lord and obey His will. The settling of accounts, whether in judgment or blessing, is in His hands and will be accomplished exactly in the right time and in the right way. In the meanwhile, God's children live in faith and hope based on the certain promise, the divine pronouncement, that they shall inherit the earth.

Paul both warns and assures the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verses 21 to 23, saying,

“So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God”

Because we belong to Christ, our place in the kingdom is as secure as His.

It is also certain *“that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9). One day, the Lord will take the earth from the hands of the wicked and give it to His righteous people, whom He will use *“to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the judgment written”* (Psalm 149:7-9). Our inheritance of the earth is not entirely future. The promise of the future inheritance itself gives us hope and happiness now; and we are able to appreciate many things, even earthly things, in ways that only those who know and love the Creator can experience. In the beautiful words of Wade Robinson hymn:

*Heav'n above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green; Something lives in ev'ry hue
Christless eyes have never seen! Birds with gladder songs o'erflow, Flow'rs with deeper
beauties shine, Since I know, as now I know, I am His and He is mine.*

Nearly a century ago George MacDonald wrote,

“We cannot see the world as God means it in the future, save as our souls are characterized by meekness. In meekness we are it's only inheritors. Meekness alone makes the spiritual retina pure to receive God's things as they are, mingling with them neither imperfection nor impurity.”

We can explain all day long what meekness is, even the importance of it, but the challenge is, as always, it's application. Of course we need to cast our eyes upon the Lord, and ask Him for His divine help and assistance. But we all need to take ownership of our actions and also do what God wants to do, not just wait until we feel like we are ready, or we want to. We need to examine ourselves honestly, asking the Holy Spirit to help us to do it. And if you don't feel like it, then ask God for that desire. We have to ask ourselves the hard questions, am I really meek? Do I deal with people gently whether they deserve it or not? Do I use the power I have for my own ends or for the glory of God? Do I always feel the need to defend myself? Do I allow my emotions to rule over my actions?

We do need humility to acknowledge our behaviours and God's strength to effect the change, as well as the Holy Spirit. We may have strong personalities, we may have personalities that can be a bit rough around the edges, or course, yes, God's children can have all these things, but we need to be obedient to the King, and behave as the King's child ought to behave, and conduct our everyday lives, with every person, not just Sunday's and not just with the select few. But as His children, we are not on our own, we are doing it for God's glory. And yes, we are blessed as we draw nearer to Him and what promises we have in Him, we will inherit the earth!

Amen.