

The Great Reversal: The Meek

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In order to experience and receive all that God wants for us in this world and in the life to come, we must embrace meekness; that is, willfully submitting ourselves to Christ and one another with gentleness and humility.

Mathew 5:5, Psalm 37

QUOTE

“In the world of men we find nothing approaching the virtues of which Jesus spoke in the opening words of the famous Sermon on the Mount. Instead of poverty of spirit we find the rankest kind of pride; instead of mourners we find pleasure-seekers; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of hunger after righteousness we hear men saying, “I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing”; instead of mercy we find cruelty; instead of purity of heart, corrupt imaginings; instead of peacemakers we find men quarrelsome and resentful; instead of rejoicing in mistreatment we find them fighting back with every weapon at their command.”

AW Tozer, Pursuit of God

INTRODUCTION

We've been studying the Beatitudes, what I've called, "The Great Reversal," the Christian manifesto. These characteristics that Jesus describes are all attached to the favor, blessing, and happiness of knowing God. These Beatitudes aren't necessarily a bunch of moral guidelines to adopt, they reflect the kind of person that we become from the inside out when we fully embrace Jesus as our king.

- **We've seen that in Christ we become poor in Spirit.** We are no longer those who see ourselves as self-sufficient, self-made people, but we see ourselves as spiritually needy. We know that apart from Christ we are nothing, so we don't boast "in ourselves," but in Christ. That sense of genuine humility is what gives someone entry into Christ's kingdom, both here and now, and eternally.
- **Secondly, God favors and blesses those who mourn.** As Christians, we have an intense spiritual sadness when we see the sin that is still in us and when we observe the sin and darkness that is all around us. We mourn the pain and brokenness in this world and in life, but we mourn with the hope of God's eternal comfort. We mourn with the promise that His Holy Spirit comes alongside us in our suffering to bring us His peace. We mourn with the confidence that our temporary pain is working a far greater eternal weight of glory.
- Robert Browning Hamilton wrote a wonderful poem that reiterates this point. Listen closely, ***"I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way, but left me none the wiser for all she had to say. I walked a mile with Sorrow, and never a word said she, but, oh, the things I learned from her when Sorrow walked with me."***

- Today, we come to the third Beatitude found in verse 5 of Matthew 5: **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”**

INTRO

When I saw the next Beatitude, I thought, “Lord, how do I insert the idea of meekness into the current tone and tenor of the world we are in?” To be honest, I have found myself battling to be meek against my carnal nature that wants to lash out, let everyone have a piece of my mind, and call down fire on all the enemies of truth.

- I was trying to avoid giving this sermon, but then the Holy Spirit spoke to me, “Josh, what the world needs right now is a church that practices Christ-like meekness.”
- When it comes to voices we currently hear in the world, we see the antithesis of meekness.
- To demand justice at the expense of other human beings well being, to fight others for the sake of self-justification rather than truth, to “have to be” the loudest voice in the crowd to feed one’s pride; these all fall far outside the realm of meekness, and have been only successful in creating an atmosphere where pride, hatred, and anger rule the day.

1

Meekness involves self-control

MEEKNESS

Meekness has frequently been defined in several ways.

- Literally translated, it means, “gentle in spirit.”
- Its ancient imagery communicates an even deeper meaning. Warren Wiersbe famously coined the definition of meekness as, **“Strength under control.”**
- One historian indicates that when **ancient warhorses were dressed for battle but holding at the line** with perfect restraint, they were called, “meek”
 - They are strong, prepared, and trained to launch into the fight. In the blink of an eye, they could be running full speed into battle, but they are not controlled by their instinct of natural impulses to fight... they are restrained by the command of the horseman.

APPLICATION

I like this image because culture often equates the word meekness with weakness.

Even when I was writing this sermon, Grammarly told me I should change out the word “MEEK” because it wouldn’t be understood! [image]

- The world paints the picture of a meek and gentle person as someone who lacks the courage to take a stand; a fearful sissy that won’t engage. Someone who is a weak doormat or pushover.
- When people today hear the word meek, they think of someone who has made themselves vulnerable to attack or who easily accepts defeat.
- **This is NOT the kind of meekness Jesus refers to.**
- In fact, Jesus used the picture of meekness to describe his own nature... and Jesus was far from weak!

[Matthew 11:29 NKJV] 29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

QUOTE

When I pastored a country church, a farmer didn't like the sermons I preached on hell. He said, "Preach about the meek and lowly Jesus." I said, "That's where I got my information about hell." -Vance Havner

APPLICATION

Jesus was gentle and humble and yet His gentleness didn't lack strength and His humility didn't lack courage.

Matthew quotes Isaiah in speaking of the kind of Messiah Jesus would be. In the description we see the gentleness of Christ:

Matthew 12:19-20 NKJV – 19 He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;

- *Jesus was gentle enough not to break the spirits of broken sinners. And aren't we glad about this? How many of our lives were like bruised reeds about ready to die and break under the weight of sin? How many of us were like smoking flax, the flames of our lives barely hanging on without any source of strength. Instead of breaking us into pieces or extinguishing us, Jesus gently welcomed us into his healing. He re-lit the spiritual flame, mended our wounds, and healed us from the disease of sin!*
- *Yet, this was the same Jesus who looked at religious and political hypocrisy and was courageous enough to rebuke, challenge, and upend the self-righteous religious establishment of the day.*

"Brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs, sons of the devil, fools, hypocrites..." These are just a few of the names Jesus boldly called the Jewish religious and political leaders... and rightly so. Their doctrine and hypocrisy were destroying the life of the nation and wrongly portraying the heart of God to the people.

- Jesus had a gentleness that attracted little children to freely run to His embrace without fear or reservation, yet had a fierceness and righteousness that caused demons to flee at the very mention of His name. He possessed the meekness to feed thousands who didn't have enough money or supplies for food, yet the righteous indignation to violently overturn the tables of the money-changers and merchants in the temple who were ripping off the people of God and distorting the purpose of God's house.
- ***Jesus was gentle enough to withstand injustice against Himself, false accusations, beatings, mocking, nails, and thorns without ever raising His voice or lifting a finger in self-defense. As a lamb led to the slaughter, as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.***
- ***But in that meekness, He was courageous enough to embrace the sin of the world, war against Satan, and endure the most miserable pain and grief imaginable in order to accomplish God's plan of eternal salvation of all mankind.***
- I think the paradox of the strength and gentleness of Christ is summed up well in Psalm 18. David speaks of himself but prophetically speaks of Jesus.

[Psalm 18:34-35 NKJV] 34 He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.

APPLICATION

Jesus was the perfect blend of Grace and truth. Jesus never gave opinions, everything He said and did was the definition of truth.

- Jesus was not afraid to shake up the religious and political establishment by injecting His kingdom truth into the mix.
- At the same time, Jesus lived in the time of the Jewish zealots who were famous for starting military instructions against the Roman Empire. Jesus refused to take that mantle... one day He will, but when He came He showed us how to speak His truth into our culture without taking the side of violent mobs that were usually led by a man who only was interested in gaining power and authority for Himself.
- Jesus showed us how to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, of course understanding that everything is under the realm of God's authority.

He is ready for battle but clothed with gentleness.

- **And this is what He wants his children to look like. People who possess strength, courage, and resolve, but have the discernment and self-control to wield it appropriately.**
- It doesn't surprise me that when describing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Paul puts meekness and self-control directly next to one another. To possess a gentle spirit in a bold way requires that a person have control over their appetites, emotions, and reactions.
 - ***A person who doesn't need to get the last word in an argument in order to win, but wins through humility and integrity.***
 - ***A person who could demand respect and accolades for their accomplishments, but rather quietly works as unto the Lord.***
 - ***A person who in the right way and at the right time can courageously stand for the truth even at the risk of self-endangerment, without ever saying or doing anything in the flesh that misrepresents the heart of God.***
 - ***A person who can be wronged, and instead of justifying and defending themselves, or exacting carnal revenge, they let their life speak for itself, and let God be the ultimate judge.***

QUOTE

"To be meek towards others implies freedom from malice and a vengeful spirit."

Carson,

APPLICATION

This seems to be the opposite of what people push themselves to be today. Chuck Smith described the powerful people of today as,

"People who have a driving ambition for power, and will not let anyone or anything stand in their way of reaching their goals."

This is how most people in world power today obtain their power. But this is not so in the kingdom! Those who rise to greater authority and influence in God's kingdom are those who receive it from God through humility and meekness.

QUOTE

But a lack of meekness has another face as well... the face of capitulation and adherence to the loudest secular voices in society.

- It has been heartbreaking to me to see countless pulpits, churches, and Christians jump so quickly onto cultural bandwagons based on their emotional reactions to social media posts or media outlets.
- Yesterday they held one biblical conviction, but today, that conviction is gone and it's been replaced by another. Why? Because that's what the culture is saying. Why? Because we wouldn't want to stir up the waters and make people think that we are any different than them.
- Well, I have news for you. We are different than them.
 - Conceding to secular voices out of guilt, shame, or the desire to be liked and affirmed is not meekness. The Bible calls it double-mindedness, being unstable in all your ways, and being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.
 - I would caution every Christian... before you post something to Instagram or Facebook, before you enter into a passionate debate, or before you spout off your opinions as though you are the authority on a matter, you best make sure your motive is pure, your argument is biblical, your heart is humble, and your sources are true.
 - Christians are not called to be pawns for godless agendas, we are called to be the pillar and ground of the truth, humbly yet boldly making the gospel and the righteousness of God louder than every other voice.

Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke 16:15 –

“You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

Mankind rewards the strength it takes to win! God rewards the strength it takes to lose when you could win in order to see a greater, godly goal accomplished.

Luke 6:26 NKJV – 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Galatians 5:7-9 NKJV – 7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

#CircumcisionMatters

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

The opposite of meekness is arrogance and being self-willed. The lack of meekness looks like:

- A carnally driven king of Israel, Saul, who when confronted about his disobedience to God justifies his actions rather than calling out for forgiveness.
- A prideful Pharaoh, who, in spite of seeing the powerful works of God, hardens his heart to resist the Lord even to the death of his firstborn son.
- A Babylonian King who gazes upon an empire and thinks within his heart that it was all a result of his own greatness rather than the providence of God.

- A brash Hebrew Judge, Samson, who instead of embracing his God-given calling, was driven by his own selfishness, immaturity, and lustful appetites, causing pain and destruction to all the people he was called to protect.

The list could go on and on, and conversely, we could give the list of all those who displayed true meekness and as a result, God established them.

2

Meekness involves submission to God's control

Meekness is our strength willingly submitted to God's control.

Josh,

APPLICATION

You see, many people, even unbelievers can practice some level of restraint and humility, and it's a good thing, but spiritually, meekness is not true meekness until you have wholly submitted your will and strength to God. When someone is willing to disregard their own "right" or "privileges" for the sake of Christ, they are displaying the height of true meekness.

- **The true meekness of a horse is not merely in its own self-restraint but in its willingness to be restrained by another.**
- The height of meekness is displayed in the statement, ***"Not my will, but thine be done."***
- ***Talk about the meekness of submission! The authority to call legions of angels to your rescue, the power of the creator of the universe at your fingertips, the power to rightfully destroy your enemies and be justified in it... and to bow to the Father's will regardless of the personal cost and sacrifice.***

When we allow ourselves to be under God's control we can look at something we really want in life, something we could take by way of skill, force, or manipulation, and say, "I'm going to let God do it." It allows us to let go of our own selfish ambition and entrust ourselves to God. Meekness is quiet strength, but not our own strength—the strength we find in the Lord.

- When God says go, but you want to hold on.
- When God says stay, but you want to run away.
- When God says surrender, but you want to control.
- When God says repent, but you want to rebel.
- When God says to speak, and you want to stay silent.
- When God tells you to shut up, but you want to keep running off your mouth.

When you fight against your own carnal tendency and submit to God's way above your own you are showing tremendous meekness.

ILLUSTRATION

I remember when we first got our dog just over a year ago.

- I was in the process of teaching her how to heel and keep pace by my side. Even now, sometimes she gets a little behind and sometimes she gets a little ahead, but what's most important is that she stays in step with me.
- She has to learn to restrain her own strength and will in order to walk in obedience.

BTW, did you hear about the guy who sent his unruly dog to the Pentecostal dog training school? He got his dog back and was impressed that she was so obedient. She sat, laid down, and rolled over. He was a little confused though why they had to advertise it as “Pentecostal” until he told the dog to heal and the dog ran over to him, placed its paws on his head and started barking in tongues.

APPLICATION

This idea of meekness is why Moses was called, by God, the meekest man to have ever lived. There are only two times in recorded history that Moses stepped outside of God’s will in his own strength, and neither went well for him. Overall, he was not a self-willed, self-empowered individual.

[Numbers 12:3 NKJV] 3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) – this, of course, is ironic given that Moses was the author of Numbers!

- When God chose him to deliver Israel out of Egypt, Moses was the first guy to recognize that God got the wrong guy!
- God said, “I AM,” and Moses responded, “Yeah, but who am I?”
- Moses tried to find every excuse to get out of God’s will for him but to no avail. Every miracle God did by the hand of Moses for the next 40 years, every sign and wonder, every time Moses heard the audible voice of God, he felt unworthy and humbled.
- Moses could have called the nation to follow him! Moses could have made his leadership decisions on his own. Moses could have developed his own following. But because he was meek, he really couldn’t.

APPLICATION

So at the end of the day, what does it practically mean to be meek?

- *Well, if we look at the sermon on the mount, we know that meekness is turning the other cheek, not exchanging reviling for reviling or curse for curse, but rather a blessing. It’s loving your enemies and doing good to those who spitefully use you. Meekness is continuing to forgive when you feel like you reached your “7 x 70” limit, and even keeping a soft heart toward your spouse when you feel it getting hard.*
- *It’s sensing anger in your heart and discerning whether or not that anger is righteous or unrighteous and what action it calls for or doesn’t.*

QUOTE

The anger of a meek man is like fire struck out of steel, hard to be got out, and when got out, soon gone.

Matthew Henry,

3

Meekness precedes inheritance

But there’s another incredible passage that teaches us the multi-faceted nature of meekness. It’s most likely the Old Testament passage that Jesus is referencing. It’s Psalm 37. Psalm 37 is about “inheriting the earth.” Five times in Psalm 37 we see the phrase, **“inherit the earth or the land.”**

[Psalm 37:11 NKJV] 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

APPLICATION

In fact, when I read Psalm 37, I see the definition of meekness fleshed out. In fact, let's turn there and scan through it.

[Psalm 37:1-40 NKJV] 1 [A Psalm] of David. Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. 6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. 7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

- *(Here we find meekness is again, submitting to the Lord: Trust him, delight in Him, feed on His faithfulness, Commit yourself to Him, rest in Him, and wait on Him. A meek person doesn't fret because of the uncertainty around them because they have a greater trust in God's character and providence. Meekness provides quiet confidence in God even if things are unsettled around us. They stay when God stays, they go when God says go, and the entire time they are keeping their eyes solely on the Lord and cultivating faithfulness.)*

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—[it] only [causes] harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while and the wicked [shall be] no [more]; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it [shall be] no [more]. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

(Refrain from anger, revenge and wrath, and give place to the Lord to accomplish His work.)

21 The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives. 22 For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off. 23 The steps of a [good] man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread. 26 He is ever merciful, and lends, And his descendants are blessed. (Meekness is displayed in generosity and righteousness.)

QUOTE

The word meek in the English comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "meca" which means companion or equal.

- The perspective is that a meek person can become a companion to any person because they don't see themselves as being above any person. They see themselves as equals to all and therefore have no problem bringing God's love to any person.
- No wonder God looks for the meek in the world to carry the authority of His kingdom!

Josh,

The end of verse 5 brings to us the promise and blessing associated with meekness: ***They shall inherit the earth.***

- This is an interesting phrase and its meaning widely debated.

- ***The Old Testament uses*** this phrase (***inherit the earth/land/region***) from Abraham on to describe the specific inheritance of the land or territory promised by God to the children of Israel. God ensured that if His people lived in meekness, righteousness, and the fear of the Lord, they would dwell securely and flourish in the land of promise.
- ***Jesus, in the sermon on the mount,*** is now talking about His kingdom. His kingdom is both a spiritual one now and a physical one later.
- ***Regarding the coming kingdom,*** the promise here is literal. Those who are Christ's will rule and reign on this earth, and ultimately inherit the new earth which God will create. Right now the shrewd, powerful, and manipulative person seems to rule the earth, but those scales will reverse in the age to come.
- According to Psalm 2:8, the entire earth is Jesus' rightful inheritance from God the father. Romans 8 declares that through faith, we have become co-heirs with Christ.
- ***But what about today.*** My personal opinion is that this speaks of the degree to which a person will experience and know the blessings and fullness of Christ's heavenly kingdom here on earth. To those who walk in meekness, the Lord will open up opportunities of influence and authority in His kingdom work on the earth. They will experience some of heaven on earth.
- The meek person may have nothing physically, but yet they live as though they possess all because they are continually and always satisfied in Jesus.

QUOTE

(The meek) are not easily provoked to anger; who patiently bear, and put up with injuries and affronts; ...do not envy the gifts and graces of other men; are willing to be instructed and admonished, by the meanest of the saints; quietly submit to the will of God, in adverse dispensations of providence; and ascribe all they have, and are, to the grace of God.

John Gill,

CONCLUSION

Meekness, like the other beatitudes, is the outflow of the inworking of the Holy Spirit. ***Galatians tells us that part of the fruit of the spirit is meekness.***

- It might be that today you are experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit that you are a person who would rather be in control than be controlled by the Lord.
- Perhaps you're discovering that you're quick to anger and lack temperance in your life.
- Maybe you have the personality that is always pushing to be in front because you can, rather than taking the back because you should.
- If you are longing for the Holy Spirit to develop true humility and gentleness in your spirit, I can't think of a better time to ask Him for it!

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:

[Ephesians 4:1-2 KJV] 1 I... beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love;