

“KINGDOM CONSTITUTION” – Lessons in the Sermon on the Mount

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Matthew 5:5

“Blessed Are The Meek”

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Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth

INTRODUCTION

We come today to Jesus’ third Beatitude – His third statement of what brings true blessedness – His third revelation of what constitutes a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Remember, Christian – this is who we are, not something we must try to attain. We must acknowledge this and each Beatitude as who we are by supernatural transformation, and then live it out to the glory of God.

And for any who listen to this, not yet having committed your life to the Lordship of Jesus, these promises of blessing are only available as you indeed commit your life to the King of the Kingdom of God. And once you have entered the Kingdom by faith in Jesus and His saving provision for you, then and only then will you find these spiritual traits blossoming in your life to glorious blessing.

Though my New American Standard Bible translation of this verse is “blessed are the gentle,” I have chosen to use the translation of “blessed are the meek” for our consideration, for most of the popular versions (King James, New International, New English and Young’s Literal) use “meek.” And I find “meek” more descriptive of the Christian nature than the easier understood, but in my opinion less expressive, “gentle.” Surely we are “gentle,” but much more, we are “meek.”

MEEKNESS – WHAT IS IT?

The word used in the Greek is “*prais*”, which is translated meekness, mildness, gentleness or humility. And it truly is all of these and more. This quality of meekness then, is humility toward God and toward others. It is having the right or power to do something but refraining doing it for the benefit of someone else.

It is seeing oneself as “poor in spirit,” (that is, spiritually helpless apart from God) and “mourning over sin” (that is, recognizing the wretchedness of our sinful state apart from the saving grace of Jesus) and emerging from these recognitions in contrite and humble awareness of God’s greatness and my inadequacy. In this way we see the progression of the first three Beatitudes.

Meekness is NOT frailty – such as “meek as a mouse.” Nor is it being “namby-pamby” easy going and non-assertive.

I like the quote from Peter Kreeft, Christian author and theologian:

“To see what meekness is, you must look not at meekness, but at Christ. Saying meekness is this or that sends you to concepts which are pale copies of reality. Saying “Jesus is meek” sends you to the living reality of it.” Peter Kreeft in “Back to Virtue”

CHRIST’S EXAMPLE

To say it another way: Meekness models the humility of Jesus Christ. Consider:

Philippians 2:6-8 [Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross.

So from this we observe that “meekness” and “humility” is a laying aside of rights and privileges and assuming the role of an obedient “servant” for the sake of God and others.

MOSES’ EXAMPLE

Few would characterize Moses, the great leader of the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness, as “meek.” And yet:

Numbers 12:3 *Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.*

Clearly Biblical and Christian “meekness” and “humility” is a quality of “quiet strength” greatness.

APOSTLES’ TEACHING

Ephesians 4:1-2 *Therefore I, the prisoner of the lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Paul treats “meekness” (same Greek word) as a “calling” we must live up to. In other words, it is “who we are” as we have been saying about the Beatitudes.

James 3:13 *Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.*

James equates “meekness” or “gentleness” with wisdom, again, to be SHOWN.

1 Peter 3:15 *But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*

Peter teaches that “meekness” (same Greek word) must accompany the boldness of evangelism. All these examples show us that meekness is something to be SHOWN in QUIET STRENGTH as we depend upon the power of God in us. It is not weakness or lack of self-assertion, but it is a laying down of oneself to “show off” God.

AN INHERENT DANGER

At this point, let me caution us to an inherent danger.

James 1:19-21 *Know this, my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. [English Standard Version]*

Here is the danger. We can become so sure of our own opinion or interpretation that we “meekly” say “whatever” and are not willing to submit our opinion to the scrutiny of God’s Word. But James instructs us that MEEKNESS IS TEACHABLE. Meekness doesn’t have a resistant, hostile spirit when being taught. Nor is it gullible, however. It is slow to anger and be defensive. It listens and considers, and submits itself to the infallible truth of the Word of God. We must be slow to write a person off, slow to condemn and slow to anger. Meekness is OPENNESS TO THE TRUTH.

THE PROMISED INHERITING OF THE EARTH

So what does “inherit the earth” mean? That is the promise for the meek. That we “inherit” the earth implies a passing on as a gift. “Inheriting” means the earth is not ours to take, but God’s to give. We have no absolute right to it, or to succeed or prosper on the earth for that matter. God promises successful maneuvering through the twist and turns of our earthly existence by our MEEKNESS. It will not be by our commanding presence that this will be accomplished, nor by our confident assertions, nor by forceful persuasions – but by a meek, tender, gentle and humble spirit given us by the indwelling Spirit of God.

Two helpful Biblical proverbs come to mind:

Proverbs 16:21b *Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.*

Oh how much I personally have needed to dwell on this teaching and let it sink in to my negotiations. A meek, sweet spirit always helps me to increase my persuasiveness, or to use the language of the Beatitude, “inherit the earth.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.*

If you think on it, this familiar and popular Scripture is a different telling of the third Beatitude. With a meek spirit of trust in the Lord comes a “straight path,” or “inheriting the earth.” MEEKNESS BRINGS RIGHTEOUS RESULTS!

OLD TESTAMENT ORIGIN

Did you know that our third Beatitude comes from a longer passage in the Psalms?

Psalm 37: 1-11

- 1 *Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrong doers.*
- 2 *For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb.*
- 3 *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.*
- 4 *Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*
- 5 *Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*
- 6 *He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment 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 carries out wicked schemes.*
- 8 *Cease from anger and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.*
- 9 *For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land.*
- 10 *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.*
- 11 *But the humble [meek] will inherit the land [earth] and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.*

A PORTRAIT OF THE MEEK – from Psalm 37

1. They trust in God, cultivating faithfulness
2. They delight in God, enjoying His goodness
3. They commit their way to God, following His path
4. They wait for God, quietly patient for God’s timing
5. They don’t fret over the wicked’s temporary successes

THE ULTIMATE “MEEK” PASSAGE

So I have saved the best for last – the ultimate passage on meekness. We said earlier that to truly look at meekness you must look to Christ. Well, here is Jesus’ classic statement on meekness. And from it we will find Jesus’ lesson on “Meekness 1-2-3.”

Matthew 11:28-30

- 28 *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
- 29 *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*
- 30 *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Here we find our source of meekness. Here we find the strength of meekness. Here we find the power of meekness. Here we find how to “inherit” the blessedness of life on this earth.

JESUS: MEEKNESS “1 – 2 – 3”

1. Come to Jesus for rest from life’s struggles

2. Emulate Jesus' gentle and humble spirit
3. Take on His "yoke" of love and find the burden light

Inevitably, struggles come. Often daily.

√ LEARN TO COME TO JESUS FOR REST. Get into His lap. Listen to His words of comfort in Scripture. Rest in knowing He has all under control and He only gives good gifts.

√ DETERMINE TO BE MEEK, GENTLE and HUMBLE in your responses to the struggle. It is the path to persuasiveness. It is the way of Jesus. React as you believe He would.

√ RECEIVE HIS LOVE (let God love you!) and GIVE HIS LOVE to others through the struggle.

And FEEL THE BURDEN LIFT. LET MEEKNESS BRING THE INHERITANCE OF BLESSING!

When I was much younger, I wrote a song based on this Matthew 11 Scripture. I want to sing for you as we close, for I hope it will sum up for you the message of this third Beatitude. And for all who are on the Oaks email chain, I will send a recording of this song for you to meditate on at home.

COME UNTO ME (song by Craig Crawshaw, lyrics from Matthew 11:28-30)

Come unto me
All of ye who are weary
And heavy laden down
And I will give you rest
And I will give you rest

Come all of you
Take on you my yoke
And learn from me
For I am gentle
And I am humble in heart

You shall find rest for your souls
For my yoke is easy
And my burden is light

Come unto me
All of ye who are weary
And heavy laden down
And I will give you rest for your souls

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"
Amen!