

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

Matthew 5:5

Intro: I have been pointing out to you each week how the Beatitudes of our Lord in Matthew 5 build upon each other. Think of them as the rungs, or steps, on a ladder. The bottom rung is, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The second rung is, “Blessed are they that mourn.” And the third rung which we will consider today is, “Blessed are the meek.” The first leads to the second, and the second leads to the third. And you have to get on the first before you can get to the second, and on the second before you can get to the third.

All of the Beatitudes, plus what the Lord had to say about our being “salt” and “light,” make up what He was teaching about what we should *be*, which is *Christian character*. It is not enough for us to act like we are “poor in spirit”; we must *be* “poor in spirit.” In the same way it is not enough that we pretend to “mourn”; we must truly mourn in the depths of our hearts. And we can say the same about meekness. People can pretend to be “meek,” and, at the same time, be very proud in their hearts. We all need to remember that the Lord told Samuel when he was looking for the son of Jesse whom he was to anoint as the next king of Israel. The Lord said this to Samuel when he was inclined to think that Eliab, one of David’s older brothers, must be the choice because he was talk and he was handsome:

The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7b).

And Solomon, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said,

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Prov.4:23).

We can’t hear words like this too often because it is so easy for all of us to pretend to be something other than what we are.

Let me remind you of the two rungs of the ladder we have considered so far.

To be “poor in spirit,” is to recognize our total spiritual poverty before God. It is because we are “poor in spirit” that we had to be saved by grace. The people of the world are always trying to build up their self-esteem, their self-worth, but our problem is that we have too much self-esteem. We think too highly of ourselves. Every person is “poor in spirit,” but the problem is that most people don’t know that they are. There is nothing about any of us that would attract the love of God, but

everything to cause God to turn away from us as unworthy of the least of His blessings. We as Christians are precious to God because of our relationship to His Son, but in ourselves we are still, as the Lord told the Laodiceans, “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17b). What a happy day it is in any person’s life when he or she realizes that nothing about him or her that is pleasing and acceptable to God.

When we take that first step, and stand upon the first rung of spiritual poverty, then the next thing that we as Christians do is to mourn over our sins. We are ashamed of our sins, and deeply regret, often with tears, that we have ever done anything that is displeasing to God. But again, while seeing the sinfulness of our sins is a very agonizing experience for the Lord’s people, yet it is a happy sorrow. Why? Because it makes us look to the Lord for our comfort. Our Lord’s promise is, “for they shall be comforted.” And how are we comforted? We are comforted by coming back to Christ, by remembering the Cross, and that it was there that the Lord took upon Himself the penalty for all of our sins. But it seems that our awareness of our own spiritual poverty and our grief over our sins, grows, the longer we know the Lord, and the better we know Him.

Now where do we go from there? What is the next rung in this ladder of Christian character? It is, “Blessed are the meek.”

You don’t need me to tell you that these characteristics are not popular in the world. Modern psychology would tell us that we are all outstanding if we would only realize it. We would realize that there is nothing that we cannot do. We live in a terrible time in the history of our country, and yet we constantly are trying to built up our ego’s. And with all of the sinning that is constantly going on, we refuse to think of it as sin. We don’t fear God. Instead, we are constantly seeking our own glory. And how can anyone mourn for sin if he doesn’t believe that there is such a thing as sin?

But for a Christian who has seen his absolute poverty before God, and who truly mourns for his sin, the effect of the first two is *meekness*.

But here again we run into conflict with the world where meekness is considered to be weakness. And so this should lead us to ask,

I. WHAT IS MEEKNESS?

The dictionary defines a meek person as gentle. He is kind to others, and patient when others are unkind or when they take advantage of him. A

meek person is mild in his temperament. He is longsuffering.

Spurgeon, in a sermon that he preached on this Beatitude, made a distinction between this third Beatitude and the first two which I found helpful. He said this:

Note too, that this third beatitude is of a higher order than the other two. There is something positive in it, as to virtue. The first two are rather expressive of deficiency, but here there is a something supplied. A man is poor in spirit; that is, he feels that he lacks a thousand things that he ought to possess. The man mourns; that is, he laments over his state of spiritual poverty. But now there is something really given to him by the grace of God: –not a negative quality, but a positive proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within his sou, so that he has become meek (Vol. LIII, pp. 541-542).

And then Spurgeon added that the first two Beatitudes show us a believer's relationship to himself, but this third one has to do with our attitude and relationship to and with others. And that not only includes our attitude and relationship toward our circumstances, and toward people, *but also toward God—and, I might say, and should say, especially toward God!*

A meek person, we learn from the first two Beatitudes, is humble, and he is very conscious of his own failures and sins. This leads him to be less critical of other, patient under trial, and contented with the circumstances of his life. Is it any wonder that the Lord said, "Blessed are the meek." When you say that a person is meek, you have said much that is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

II. CHRIST, THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF MEEKNESS.

If we want to know what meekness is, there are many examples of meekness in the Bible. The Lord Himself commended Moses for His meekness. We have that testimony in Num. 12:3:

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

And this was said of Moses when he was being criticized by Aaron and Miriam, his brother and sister, because he had married an Ethiopian woman. There was undoubtedly some real justification for the criticism, but there is no indication of any retaliation on the part of Moses. Moses evidently took the criticism patiently. And when the Lord struck Miriam with leprosy because she had criticized her brother, Moses, at the request of Aaron, prayed for Miriam, and the Lord healed her of her leprosy. That was on time when Moses showed his meekness.

We see it also in the many times that the children of Israel rebelled against the Lord. It seems that Moses was always falling on his face and pleading with the Lord to spare and forgive the people.

Even the way in which Moses argued with the Lord when the Lord called him at the burning bush, claiming that he was not fit to lead Israel out of Egypt, the objections he raised were all evidences of the meekness that the Lord had worked in his heart during those year he spent in exile.

Or take Abraham. One example was the time when he divided the land with Lot, and gave Lot the first choice of where he wanted to be. Another was when, at the command of the Lord, he took Isaac his son out to offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Joseph is another great example of meekness, suffering at the hands of his brothers, lied about by Potiphar's wife, and being forgotten by the butler for two years while he remained in prison.

Think of the lives of Job, and of David, and of Daniel, and you have examples of meekness. Ruth is an excellent example of meekness. And Paul and Peter became examples of the meekness in the NT, along with many others.

But remember, that none of these people, nor any others we might mention from Scripture, or from church history, or even from the present day—none of them were by nature meek. No one is, *with one exception! And that exception is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone, of all people, was meek by nature. Our Lord teaches us that God is meek. It is a manifestation of His grace.*

But let me remind you of what the Scriptures say about the meekness of our Lord.

The first passage is found right here in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 11, verses 28-30:

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We should not miss the emphasis that our Lord made. If we want to be like the Lord and learn of Him, we must begin with His meekness and the fact that He was lowly in heart.

A second passage, also in Matthew's Gospel, which is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Zechariah.

Our Lord sent two of His disciples to get a donkey for Him to ride on into Jerusalem. And Matthew tells us why this was done:

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass (Matt. 21:4-5).

The meekness of our Lord was evident from His birth to His death. Listen to the familiar account given to us by the Apostle Paul in Phil. 2:5-8:

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Here we see the meekness of Christ in His birth, and in His death.

And then we have Peter's words in 1 Pet. 2 which speak of the meekness of our Lord:

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

What an amazing example of meekness! When the crowds reviled Him as He was hanging on the Cross, He did not revile them, nor threaten them, but committed Himself unto His Father in heaven, the Judge of all the earth.

None of the examples that I have given you, is an example of weakness. And that is especially true of our Lord. A meek person is the strongest of all people.

Our Lord has given us an example of meekness in the last six verses of this fifth chapter of Matthew. (Read Matt. 5:43-48.)

Now to summarize,

III. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUALITIES IN MEEKNESS?

We can see these in the life of our Lord. Thomas Watson, one of the godly Puritans, has pointed them out very clearly. And think of the examples I have given you from Scripture, and especially that of our Lord, as I mention what these are.

Meekness is manifested in our attitude toward God, and, secondly, in our attitude toward each other and all other people.

We manifest our meekness by our submission to God's will as He providentially deals with us from day to day. And we also manifest our meekness to God by our submission to His Word. And there is a very close relationship between these two. And both of these take a full measure of the grace of God because it is only by His grace that we can render such submission to Him.

To accept from God's hand His providential dealing with us, and to make sure that every detail of our lives is directed by the revealed Word of God. This is meekness in our relationship with God. How perfectly this was seen in the earthly life of our Lord.

Meekness toward men is just as difficult for us as meekness for God. In fact, it is impossible, again, without the grace of God. It is a part of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). Watson said that it includes three things:

- 1) The bearing of injuries.
- 2) The forgiving of injuries.
- 3) Returning good for evil.

It is not natural for us to do any of these, but it is in the difficulties of every day life, and the problems we have with people, that what Watson called "the divine beauty and sweetness" of meekness is to be seen, which confirms the reality of our faith, and is often used of God to draw others to Himself.

May God work in our hearts that we may demonstrate in our daily live that meekness which please God and makes us a blessing to each other, and to all men.

But I have one point left.

IV. WHAT DID OUR LORD MEAN, “FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH”?

This statement has been interpreted in a number of ways, but the best way to explain it is by turning to Psalm 37, the place from which the Lord took this expression. And this gives us further light on what it means to be *meek*.

The Psalm begins by mentioning the conflict between evil doers and the workers of iniquity, on the one hand, and those who trust in the Lord, on the other hand. And there is a danger that those who know the Lord will be inclined to trade blow for blow with the workers of iniquity. What those who know the Lord need to is to “trust in the Lord” (v. 3), “delight” themselves “in the Lord” (v. 4), “commit” their “way unto the Lord” (v. 5), and “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (v. 7). And why are the people of God to behave in such a different way? See the answer in vv. 8-18.

I believe this statement means two things:

- 1) That the earth will eventually belong to the righteous. It will not come about by Christians becoming a political party. Nor will it come about by such tactics as bombing abortion clinics, nor even by blocking the entrance to such places. It will eventually belong to the people who are known for their meekness, those who truly belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, led by the One Who is the meekest of all, our blessed Lord. The kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.
- 2) On a lesser scale, I believe along with many others that this is a prediction that those in the world who are to be won to Christ, will be won not by great campaigns, nor by all of the methods of men which are used to get people to “decide for Christ.” But the power of the Gospel will be most strongly felt by the world when the people of God, proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, demonstrate the reality of their faith, by manifesting in daily life, “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1). So much of the work that is done today, supposedly in the Name of the Lord, is so contrary to the way the Lord worked, and the way the Lord lived, that it is hard for people to see any connection between the Christ of the Cross and the people who claim to be His followers.

The way of meekness is the way to the blessing of God, and it is by a “meek and quiet spirit” those spiritually blind can be made to see, and those who are hardened in sin can be made to be receptive to the Gospel.

Matthew 5:5 (8)

So let us go forth into the world each day in “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” That is the way to victory and great blessing.