

Blessed!

A Study on the *Beatitudes* of Jesus

As of 12/29/19

Part 4 The Exposition of Matthew 5:4- continued

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Blessedness of Meekness

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Now like the first two Beatitudes, this one must have been very shocking and perplexing- to Jesus' hearers. It may have even provoked them to anger or resentment. Because the pervasive attitude of the Jews of the 1st Century was comprised of several unalterable "facts":

- ✓ We are God's chosen people
- ✓ We are saved by virtue of being chosen
- ✓ God loves us- and no one else
- ✓ Pagans are brutally dominating us
- ✓ The pagans are evil
- ✓ It is God's Will to destroy the pagans
- ✓ We hate them

- ✓ We pray and work toward their destruction
- ✓ We are in accord with the Will of God
- ✓ Messiah will come and agree with us
- ✓ Messiah will come and destroy the pagans
- ✓ We are earnestly praying and looking for that kind of Messiah

So, when Jesus came and began teaching His Doctrine- the Jews *categorically* rejected Him- because He was at such odds with the prevailing Theology of the day.

Matthew 5:38-48

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'

39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus taught Principles that were totally foreign to the thinking of 1st Century Jews. But what Jesus taught is also foreign to the thinking of many 21st Century Americans as well. But Jesus' immediate audience were spiritually proud and spiritually self-sufficient. They were proficient in erecting a pious facade. They actually believed that the Messiah was coming soon and would *commend* them for their Goodness. And they just knew that 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 people of God.

So, the average Jew of that day eagerly anticipated the Coming of the Messiah. But they assumed that He would deal gently with them and harshly with their oppressors- who for nearly a hundred years had been the Romans. After the Maccabean revolution that freed them from Greece, 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. Since 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, or procurators, the best known of which to us was Pilate.

And the Jews so despised Roman oppression that sometimes they even refused to admit it existed. One day as He taught on the Mount of Olives, Jesus had one of His strongest exchanges with the Pharisees. When He said "to those Jews who had believed Him,

John 8:31b&32

**31 ... If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;
32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."**

... the Pharisees' response was strange.

John 8:33

We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free**'?"**

... then Jesus revealed what He was really talking about:

John 8:34-59

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.****

35 "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38 "I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father."

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.****

40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.

44 "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

- 46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?**
- 47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."**
- 48 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"**
- 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.**
- 50 "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.**
- 51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."**
- 52 The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'**
- 53 "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?"**
- 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';**
- 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.**
- 56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."**
- 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"**
- 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."**
- 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.**

The Reality was that Israel's history was one of repeated conquest and oppression- by Egypt, Assyria, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and, at that very time, Rome. Apparently, Pride would not allow those Pharisees to acknowledge one of the most obvious facts of their nation's history and of their present situation.

But the main topic of discussion back then- was Deliverance. Everyone was talking about Deliverance. Every Jew hoped for Deliverance of some sort- by some means. Many were expecting Deliverance to come through the "Messiah". For example, God had directly promised the godly Simeon

Luke 2:25&26

- 25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.**
- 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**

Simeon's expectation was fulfilled- *not* when he saw the "warrior-king" that many expected- but when he was given the privilege of seeing the true Messiah- as an eight- day old baby! Others, however, such as the Pharisees, expected the

Messiah to come with great fanfare and a mighty show of supernatural power. They *assumed* He would miraculously throw off the yoke of Rome and establish a Jewish State- a revived Theocracy and Holy Commonwealth that would rule the world. Others, such as the materialistic Sadducees, hoped for change through Political compromise, for which they were despised by many fellow Jews. The monastic Essenes, isolated both physically and philosophically from the rest of Judaism, lived largely as if Rome and the rest of the world did not exist.

The Zealots, as their name implies, were the most vocal and active proponents of Deliverance. Many of them expected the Messiah to come as a powerful, irresistible military leader- who would conquer Rome in the same way that Rome had conquered them. They were not, however, waiting passively for their Deliverer, but were determined that, whenever and however He might come, they would do their part to make His job easier.

Their numbers, influence, and power continued to grow until Rome brutally attempted to crush Jewish resistance. In A.D. 70- Titus totally destroyed Jerusalem and massacred over a million Jews. Three years later Flavius Silva finally succeeded in his long siege against the stronghold at Masada. When Jewish rebelliousness continued to frustrate Rome, Hadrian swept through Palestine during the years 132-35 and systematically destroyed most of the cities and slaughtered the Jews living there.

But even though the Zealots were not many in number- they had the sympathy and moral support of many of the people, who wanted Rome to be overthrown- *however* it was done. So, to some degree- everyone was looking for Deliverance; and everyone was looking for a Deliverer.

But nobody anticipated that the Messiah would be Humble and Meek. Yet those were the very Attitudes that Jesus was both teaching and practicing. The idea of a meek Messiah leading a meek people- was far from any of their concepts of the Messianic Kingdom. How could a meek Messiah defeat the Romans? How could a meek people bring about the Jewish Kingdom that would rule the world? So, even though the Jews understood military power; and even though they understood miracle power; and even though they understood the power of Compromise- they did *not* understand the Power of Meekness.

The people, as a whole, eventually rejected Jesus because He did not fulfill their Messianic expectations. So, their wrong view of Eschatology encouraged them to reject Jesus. Jesus actually preached *against* the Means in which they had put their Hope. So, they first rejected; then grew to hate; and finally killed Jesus- because, instead of *approving* their religion- He condemned it. And instead of leading them to Independence from Rome- Jesus disdained revolutionary Acts and offered a Way of even greater subservience.

So, in their minds Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah, and the final evidence was His crucifixion. The Old Testament taught that anyone hanged on a tree was "**accursed of God**" (**Deuteronomy 21:23**), yet that is *exactly* where Jesus' Life ended- on a Cross- and a Roman Cross at that. And as the only sinless Man Who

ever lived hung dying- some of the Jewish leaders could not resist a last taunt against His Claim to be Savior and Messiah:

Matthew 27:42&43

42 "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.

43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

In the early days of Apostolic Preaching- the Death and Resurrection of Jesus were the greatest hindrances to belief in the Gospel. These ideas were a hinderance to both Gentiles and Jews

1Corinthians 1:21-25

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The Gospel was "foolishness" to those Gentiles who considered the body to be inherently evil and thought it absurd that the Savior of the world not only would allow Himself to be killed- but would come back from the dead in bodily form. To the Jews, the Gospel was a stumbling block because the idea of the Messiah dying at all- much less on a Cross- was unthinkable. How could a Messiah, Who taught for just a few years; accomplished absolutely nothing as far as anyone could see; and then was rejected by the religious teachers and put to death- be worth believing in?

The Acts 3:14-21

14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

15 but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, *a fact* to which we are witnesses.

16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,
21 whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

But we must remember that rejection of Jesus started long before His Crucifixion. When He began the Sermon on the Mount by teaching Humility, Mourning, and Meekness- the people sensed something was wrong. This strange Preacher could hardly be the Deliverer they were looking for. In their mind, great Causes are fought by the Proud, not the Humble.

The common thinking of the Jew was, "You cannot win Victories while mourning, and you certainly could never conquer Rome with Meekness. This 'Jesus' is beside himself and simply doesn't know what he's talking about." And so, their real bad Eschatology, about the Messiah, caused the 1st Century Jew to reject the incarnate God. So, in spite of all the Miracles of His Ministry, the majority of the people never really believed in Jesus as the foretold Messiah, because He failed to act in either military or miracle Power against Rome.

What we need to always remember when studying this- is that the average Jew of that day was not looking for the Messiah that God had told them was coming. They had fashioned a "messiah" in their own minds that had nothing to do with entire Passages like **Isaiah 40-60**, which so clearly and vividly portrays the Messiah as the "Suffering Servant" as well as the "Conquering Lord." They could not accept the notion that their "messiah" would be anything other than a dynamic Warrior/King- who would militarily vanquish the pagan Romans.

Isaiah 53

1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10 But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Jesus' Teaching seemed new and unacceptable to most of His hearers- not because it didn't line up with the Old Testament (it did)- but simply because the Old Testament was so greatly neglected and misinterpreted. So, the average Jew did not recognize the "Humble and Self-denying Jesus" as being the Messiah- because they had never heard the Scriptures taught correctly. And so, when Jesus appeared- He was *not* the kind of Messiah they wanted.

The Meaning of "Meekness/ Gentleness"

The English word, "**Gentle**" as used in **Matthew 5:5** comes from the Greek word, *praos*, and basically means: *mild or soft*. This term sometimes was used to describe: *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 meant: *being gentle of spirit, meek, submissive, quiet, and tenderhearted*. During His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Old Testament was fulfilled that had been spoken by both Isaiah (62:11) and Zechariah (9:9) about the Messiah being both a King and a Man Who was Gentle:

Matthew 21:1-5

21 When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

2 saying to them, "**Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.**

3 "**If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them.**"

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 "**SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.'**"

The Apostle Paul *lovingly* referred to this Gentle/Meek Characteristic of Jesus when he wrote,

2Corinthians 10:1-6

1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

2 I ask that when I am present I *need* not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

The essential difference between being “Poor in Spirit” and being “Meek, or Gentle” is that “Poverty of Spirit” focuses on our *own* sinfulness, whereas Meekness focuses on God's Holiness. So, these two characteristics are two-sides of the same coin- because 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 really are. And when we look at God- we are made Humble by seeing how Righteous and Worthy He is.

So, again can see the logical sequence and progression in the Beatitudes. Poverty of Spirit (the first) is negative, and results in Mourning (the second). Meekness (the third) is positive, and results in seeking Righteousness (the fourth). Being “Poor in Spirit” causes us to turn away from ourselves in mourning, and Meekness causes us to turn toward God in seeking His Righteousness.

So, the Blessings of the Beatitudes are for those who are realistic about their own sinfulness; who are genuinely repentant of their sins; and who are responsive to God in His Righteousness. Those who are “unblessed” and “unhappy”- those who are shut out of the Kingdom are the Proud; and the Arrogant; the Unrepentant; the Self-sufficient; and the Self-righteous- who see in themselves no unworthiness and feel no need for God's Help (Grace) or 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*. And God is opposed to people like that.

1Peter 5:5-7

5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for *GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.*

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

The way of Meekness was not the way of most of the Jews- and therefore the true Kingdom was not their Kingdom. The proud Pharisees wanted a *miraculous* Kingdom while the proud Sadducees wanted a *materialistic* Kingdom. The proud Essenes wanted a *monastic* Kingdom while the proud Zealots wanted a *military* Kingdom. But the humble Jesus only offered a *meek* Kingdom.

Meekness has always been God's Way for Mankind. It was the Way of the Old or the First Covenant as delineated in the Old Testament Scriptures . For example, In the **Book of Job** we are told that God...

Job 5:11b

... sets on high those who are lowly, And those who mourn are lifted to safety.

The Old Testament describes Moses, the Jews' dynamic Deliverer and Law-giver like this,

Numbers 12:3

(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

The Jews' greatest King- David- who killed his "tens of thousands" and was their supreme military hero, wrote,

Psalms 25:9

He [God] leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way.

Meekness is also the Way of the New Testament. It was taught by Jesus in the Beatitudes as well as elsewhere and was continued to be taught by the Apostles. For example, Paul entreated the Ephesians 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" (Ephesians 4:1-2).

... he told the Colossians to

"put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

.. and he told Titus 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" (Titus 3:1-2).

What is commonly misunderstood- is that Meekness is somehow connected to Weakness. It isn't. This word was used in much extrabiblical literature to refer to the violent breaking of an animal. So, Meekness actually means: "*power put under control*". A person without Meekness is

"like a city that is broken into and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

An unbroken colt is absolutely useless. Medicine that is too strong will do more harm than good. A wind out of control- destroys. And human emotion out of control- also destroys. And it has no place in God's Kingdom. So, Meekness is the trait that God uses to manage our other qualities- in a godly way.

Meekness is the opposite of Violence and Vengeance. The meek soul was described by the writer of the Book of Hebrews like this:

Hebrews 10:32-34

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

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 defend himself- first of all because that is His Lord's Command and example, and second because he knows that he does not *deserve* defending. 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.

Yet Meekness is not Cowardice or emotional Flabbiness. It is not a lack of Conviction nor is it mere "human niceness". Meekness is also not being "passive" or milk-toast; and does not commend us to be a "conscientious objectors". Meek men, all through the Bible went to war; defended the weak; and killed bad and evil men. So, Meekness is actually great Courage, Strength, and Conviction. Yet all of that- is *tempered* by the Divine Pleasantness that comes only from God. The Spirit of Meekness is, in essence, the Spirit of Christ- Who defended the Glory of His Father and turned over the tax tables- yet gave Himself in Sacrifice for others. And He should be our great Example- not what we see and hear from other carnal men.

1Peter 2:21-24

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;
23 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;
24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Even though Jesus was perfectly 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 never did anything wrong- the only One who always had a perfect Defense for everything He said or did- never defended Himself!

When His Father's House was profaned by moneychangers and sacrifice sellers,

"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" (John 2:14-15).

Jesus scathingly and repeatedly denounced the hypocritical and wicked religious leaders; He twice cleansed the Temple by force; and He fearlessly uttered Divine Judgment on those who forsook and corrupted God's Word. Yet Jesus did not once raise a finger or give a single retort in His Own Defense. 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.

So, while Meekness is not Weakness- it never uses its Power for its own defense or for selfish purposes. Meekness is Power that is completely surrendered to God's Will and Control.

The Manifestation of Meekness/Gentleness

One of the best ways to describe Meekness is to actually see it in action. And we are blessed that Scripture has many examples of Meekness.

Abraham

After God had called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans to the Promised Land; and had made the marvelous unconditional Covenant with him; a dispute about grazing lands arose between the servants of Abraham and those of his nephew Lot. Now we need to remember that 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 essentially a "hanger-on" an "in-law" (nephew) who 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, thus giving up his own rights and prerogatives for the sake of Harmony between their households, and for the sake of their public 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. Now keep in mind that Abraham absolutely 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

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's Power in Egypt, he was in a position to take severe Vengeance on his brothers- *who were patently guilty and had not repented.*

So, when they came to Egypt asking for grain for their starving families, Joseph could very easily have refused. In fact, he could have put his brothers into more severe slavery than that into which they had sold him. Yet he had only Forgiveness and Love for them. And when Joseph finally revealed to them who he really was, the Bible says,

Genesis 45:2

He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard *it*, and the household of Pharaoh heard *of it*.

... then Joseph said,

Genesis 45:3b-8

3 ... I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

6 "For the famine *has been* in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7 "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

... and somehow, Joseph had enough insight into the Absolute Sovereignty of God to say this to his sinful brothers:

Genesis 50:20b

... you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this

present result, to preserve many people alive.

... so, in meekness Joseph understood that it was God's place to judge and his to forgive and help.

Many times, 21st Century Christians testify about how hard it is to live like our examples in the Bible. And my response has always been, *"No. It isn't hard at all. It is absolutely impossible to live like this- in and of ourselves."* But God has been so gracious to give us the "Tools" that we need to use to empower and enable us to "walk this world in white". And those "Spiritual Tools" are:

- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Godly Fellowship
- The Sacraments
- Fasting
- Service to Others

... and these tools have been given to help us to be "spiritual" rather than "carnal". They empower us to be obedient rather than rebellious. They enable us to see and understand Truth better; and to comprehend what Obedience to the Bible actually looks like.

But we also have an enormous amount of "Spiritual Helps" that Joseph never had- or even knew about. Among them are:

- Jesus constantly interceding for all believers
- The indwelling Holy Spirit- making intercession for us- according to the Will of God
- 66 inspired, inerrant, and infallible Books
- 6,000 years of human history to study and learn from
- 2,000 years of Church history- filled with people who actually accomplished what we strive for (the "Communion of Saints")

.. so, in many ways, we have much more to go on- than either Joseph or Abraham. And those Gifts will all work in our favor to equip us be what God expects us to be.

Moses

We should remember that 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

Numbers 12:3b

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

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,

Exodus 3:11b

... Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?

After God explained His plan for Moses to confront Pharaoh, Moses again pleaded,

Exodus 4:10b

... Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.

... Moses would defend God before anyone, but he did not defend himself before God.

David

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..

1Samuel 24:5b&6

5 ... David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe.

6 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."

Many years later, after David's rebellious son Absalom had driven 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,

2Samuel 16:10-12

10 ... What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the Lord has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him.

12 "Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day."

Uzziah

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" (2Chronicles 26:4-5), became self-confident after the Lord gave him great victories over the Philistines, Ammonites, and other enemies.

2Chronicles 26:16

But 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.

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. And as a consequence,

2Chronicles 26:20b

... he *was* leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him.

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

Philippians 3:3-21

3 ... we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,
9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,
14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;
16 however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.
17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.
18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ,
19 whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.
20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;
21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

... and ...

Philippians 4:10-20

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity.
11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.
12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.
13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

16 for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs.

17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

20 Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Result of Meekness

As with the other Beatitudes, the general result of Meekness is being blessed; or being made divinely Happy. God gives the Meek His Own Joy and Gladness. More specifically, however, the **Gentle...shall inherit the earth**. So, 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, largely lost and perverted after the Fall. Theirs will be Paradise regained.

One day God will completely reclaim His earthly Domain, and those who have become His children, through Faith in His Son, will rule that Domain with Him. And 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 own inherent unworthiness and sinfulness; and cast themselves on the Mercy of God. The emphatic pronoun, "*autos*" (**they**) is again used (see vv. 3, 4), indicating 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, "*kleoropomea*" (**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**:

But the humble will inherit the land And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

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,

Psalm 37:10

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*.

Here, David said that the wicked person's time of Judgment was coming, as was the righteous person's time of Blessing. And that tells us that our sole

responsibility is to trust the Lord and obey His Will. The settling of accounts, whether in Judgment or Blessing, is in God's 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. The Apostle Paul both warned and assured the Corinthians, saying,

1Corinthians 3:21-23

21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,

22 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,

23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

.. and because we belong to Jesus Christ, our place in His Kingdom is as secure as His is. But on the other hand- it is also certain

1Corinthians 6:9b

... that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God

... so, 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...

Psalm 149:7-9

7 To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples,

8 To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron,

9 To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the Lord!

Our Inheritance of the earth is not entirely future, however. The Promise of the future Inheritance itself gives us Hope and Happiness right 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,

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, the Scottish author, poet, and minister 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 its only inheritors. Meekness alone makes the spiritual retina pure to receive God's things as they are, mingling with them neither imperfection nor impurity."*

The Necessity of Meekness

Meekness is necessary, first of all, because it is *required* for Salvation. Only the meek will inherit the earth, because only the meek belong to the King- Who will rule the future Kingdom of the earth.

Psalm 149:4 (NIV)

For the Lord takes delight in His people says the psalmist; he crowns the humble with salvation

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

Matthew 18:2-6

2 ... He called a child to Himself and set him before them,

3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Meekness is also necessary because it is commanded.

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility

James commands believers,

James 1:21

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,

1Peter 3:15

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

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 also reflected in our attitude toward other children of God. Humility in relation to fellow Christians gives God glory.

Romans 15:5-7

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

