

... The Meek(3)

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Mt. 5:5

Each of the “*blessed are...*” passages in this sermon contain spiritual attitudes/emotions that temper and modify the way we relate to others. They work like 3D glasses used to watch a movie. With them we gain an entirely different experience and perspective than without them. People who live life with these qualities will be congratulated and honored. They will receive great benefits here and praise from God then. Such people truly “*by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality!*” (Rom. 2:7).

What does it mean to be meek? Before reading further how would you define and explain how it has changed you? The Greek word translated meekness is one of the few Greek terms that we must learn before we can understand. It has an exclusive and distinctive meaning not fully conveyed by “*meek.*”

The meaning of “*πραυτεας*” is **not readily expressed in English**, for the terms **meekness, mildness, commonly used, suggest weakness and pusillanimity** to a greater or less extent, whereas **prautes does nothing of the kind**. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a rendering less open to objection than ‘meekness.’ ‘Gentleness’ has been suggested, but as **prautes** describes a condition of mind and heart, and as ‘gentleness’ is appropriate rather to actions, this word is no better than that used in both English Versions. **It must be clearly understood**, therefore, that the **meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power**. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but **the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command**. Described negatively, **meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest**; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because **it is not occupied with self at all**. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

Note: “*prautes-meekness*” is “*not readily expressed in English.*” Our “*meek*” has an additional component completely lacking in the Greek. Our “*meekness*” is a “*fruit of weakness*” but “*prautes-meekness*” is the “*fruit of power!*” In the world, people are “*meek*” only because they are “*weak.*” Children call someone acting “*meek*” in a time of conflict a “*sissy*”, “*wimp*” or “*chicken!*” But as Vine states: “*the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power.*”

We primarily use *meekness* during times of conflict. A disagreement in the home or church, a confrontation at work or a skirmish during the day with a stranger occurs when two people want the same thing and only can receive it. Selfish and powerful people use all their resources to win and get what they want. A meek person steps back and allows the other to have it(win) because of their unselfish and loving heart. So “*meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest*” for “*it is not occupied with self at all.*” Those without *meekness* will “*win at all costs*” and feel *cheated and shamed* at being “*beaten.*” The meek never allow selfish desires to rule. They refuse to allow a confrontation to turn into a battle with a winner and a loser. They destroy selfishness, conceit and ambition with love and humility, putting others interests above their own.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil. 2:3-4

What many fail to see is that to be useful, strength must be harnessed. A strong horse must be meek enough to be controlled by the rider. If the horse seeks to “*win*” in any contest of wills, it has diminished its value to the rider. In the same way, God needs us to serve him in meekness as Jesus did. If “*winning*” is more important and we feel shame if we “*lose*” in any conflict with a lost soul or erring brother our value to God diminishes. Far from winning, God asks: “*Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. Phil 4:5.* We need to be known for our service, submission, and giving in to the needs of others. Not for winning.

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ... 18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ... 1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, ... 7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding... 8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, 1Pet. 2:11-13, 18; 3:1,7,8-9

Another Lexicon gives more insight into “*prautes-meekness*” building upon these previous conclusions:

“*πραυτεας*... “*mild and gentle friendliness,*” is the opposite of roughness... of bad temper, or sudden anger... and brusqueness ... It is close to the *epieikeia* which tempers stern law... Among the Greeks gentle friendliness is highly prized as a social virtue ... The systematic thinker Aristotle places *prautes* as... a mean between *orgilotes* (“*anger,*” “*bad temper*”) and the spineless incompetence of *aorgesia*... Since he sets a positive value on justifiable and moderate anger, mildness is for him, with *euorgeton*, the laudable mean between the extremes of anger and indifference...” (Kittel, Vol 6 p 645-646)

Meekness is a “*mild and gentle friendliness*” which replaces the selfish desires of our youth. Children who do not get their way pout or become angry. They give short answers or the silent treatment. They rebel in little ways to let others know they are unhappy. As we grow to become *meek* we set these things aside.

“prautes-meekness” is the “opposite of roughness, bad temper, sudden anger and brusqueness.” A lack of meekness is only our old man seeking to assert its selfish pride and need for dominance. We should instead seek peace by giving in and humbly serving others.

“He who would love life And see good days... 11 Let him seek peace and pursue it. 1 Pet. 3:10-11

Other aspects of *meekness* arise when we are inconvenienced by the mistakes and weaknesses of others. A slow driver making mistakes that slow us down. A busy clerk who is inept working and at a snails pace. An arrogant person treating us rudely or with contempt. A new convert who refuses to see a truths we are setting forth from the Scriptures. In these things we are sorely tempted to lash out in anger or frustration, or worse we bring those frustrations home to take out on a spouse or children.

When in a hurry *“prautes-meekness”* keeps us calm and merciful even when others hinder us or refuse to give us respect. When seeking a parking place or the fastest lane when checking out of a store we are always *“mild and gentle.”* When trying to influence others to our way of thinking at home or work we never allow *“self-assertiveness and self-interest”* to lead us astray.

Blessed are those with a *“mild and gentle friendliness.”* Blessed are those who have removed *“roughness, bad temper, sudden anger, or brusqueness”* from their character. Blessed are those who are *“equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing.”* Blessed are those who know the *“mean between the extremes of anger and indifference.”* Blessed are those who have set aside *“self-assertiveness and self-interest.”*

The Danger of Extremes

At this point in the article, we may find ourselves arguing with these conclusions. Some will say that if we are always meek in this way we will not properly stand up for the truth of the gospel. If we are too mild and gentle then we will not *“reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.”* Others may be thinking that a preacher who does *“reprove, rebuke and exhort”* is not truly meek. A husband/father may reason that since he is the head this meekness does not hinder his rule and domination(always getting his way). The truth is that no matter what other commands are under consideration meekness will moderate and help us fulfill them properly. No command of God is going to be properly fulfilled if it is used for *“self-assertiveness and self-interest.”* Every command of God will be fully complied with when we are *“equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing.”*

These extremes are removed when we see how they are used by Moses and Jesus.

Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth. Num 12:3

So when the “meekest man in all the earth saw the calf and the dancing his meekness did not stop him from reacting with righteous indignation. His anger waxed hot and he strongly rebuked them.

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it. Ex 32:19-20

Yet that indignation had nothing to do with him. He was not angry because he was being slighted or his authority was being flouted. He was angry because God was being dishonored! Yet even then he was *“equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing”* because the next day he was pleading with God to forgive them. It was never personal with Moses. It was always zeal for God. When his own honor was attacked by Miriam and Aaron, he did not fight or get angry in any way. For that reason God stood up for him.

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) 4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out ... Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" 9 So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them... Num. 12:1-4 8-9

Jesus was also *“meek and lowly”* in heart(Mt. 11:28-29). Yet he responded with zeal when he witnessed the contempt and irreverence the Jews displayed in the temple by making it *“house of merchandise.”*

He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise! 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up. Jn. 2:13-17.

But like Moses, when the need arose to stand up for himself, He meekly bore their hatred.

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 1Pet. 2:20-24

As Jesus and Moses, Paul too warned them that they would not receive gentleness if they did not repent.

As in disciplining our children, there is a time to be stern. But it is stern with Scriptures and not with self.

What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness? KJV

Yet as Moses, when he heard of their repentance, he was meek and loving in the second letter.

True meekness is revealed in how we respond when our own needs and desires are being thwarted. If it is only personal victory we seek, then we are not being meek to fulfill that desire. A meek person still feels "righteous indignation" for God and His Word. Moses' anger "waxed hot" at the golden calf (Ex 32:19). Paul warned their conduct toward the Lord would determine if he came with a rod or love and meekness. But when we are being personally mistreated, slighted or cheated, meekness destroys anger or indignation along with any desire for personal victory. Outbursts of anger, frustration, or name calling over personal mistreatment is a clear sign we are not meek. A soft answer or being wrong is a true win!

A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. Prov 15:1

Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 1 Cor 6:7-8

We must fight the influence of our culture. Americans have their "rights" and demand respect! They easily become angry or irritated when others violate those rights. We are conditioned to stand up for ourselves. We see those who do not stand up as weak. In our "macho" society many feel like a sissy or weakling instead of as blessed when we respond meekly. Many feel they have been taken advantage of or become a pushover. Thus our culture points in one direction and Jesus in the exact opposite.

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 him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 And whoever shall force 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. Mt. 5:38-42.

Meekness brings the power to accept being wronged as normal. Our controlled strength allows us to be mistreated without feeling weak or small. When meekness fully captures our heart we know that with all the evil in this world, we will often be wronged. Thus we do not become bitter but defer to God.

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. 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. Ps. 37:7-9

This is exactly what Jesus did on the cross. "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Lk. 23:34. The desire to be soothing, calming and helpful to others is greater than a desire for rights. When cheated out of what is rightfully ours, we remain kind, compassionate and loving.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom 12:18-21

Although Americans have their rights, the servants of God and Jesus Christ do not! We must fight the seductive influence of the world. We cannot be proud Americans with rights and humble Christians turning the other cheek. We must choose and blessed are those who choose meekness.

Although in our English translations they are different words, it is the same Greek term (πραυτες).

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness(prautes)**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Gal 6:1-2*

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and **gentleness(prautes)**, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:1-4*

*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be **gentle(prautes)** to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Tim 2:24-26*

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the **meekness(prautes)** of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:13-18*

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with **meekness(prautes)** and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 1Pet 3:15-17*

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, **meekness(prautes)**, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a*

complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. Col 3:12-14

Each passage uses *prautes-meekness* in ways that help us see its scope. When working with an erring brother, meekness forces us to be mild, gentle and compassionate as we seek to win their soul (Gal 6:1). In endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, we must have humility and a mild and gentle friendliness (Eph. 4:2). Even false teachers must be approached with a meekness that keeps anger in check and does not go too far, for we all need to show the wisdom from above (a mild and gentle friendliness) that is also used as we teach the lost (2Tim. 2:25; Jas. 3:13; 1Pet. 3:15).

... They shall Inherit the Earth.

Many have struggled with Jesus promise: "the meek will *inherit the earth.*" Some use it as proof this earth will never be destroyed. Yet the Spirit denied it when speaking through Peter:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ... 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth... 2Pet. 3:10-13

Others use this promise to prove the entire sermon on the Mount is not for Christians but only for Israel, citing the land promises of Deuteronomy. Yet a careful reading shows the fallacy of these thoughts. First, God never promised Israel they would inherit the earth. Every reference in Genesis through Deuteronomy about their inheritance was only the land of Canaan. This The 37th Psalm reveals the truth.

*For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They **shall inherit the earth.** ... 11 **But the meek shall inherit the earth.** And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. ... 22 **For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth,** But those cursed by Him shall be cut off. Ps 37:9, 11, 22*

Those who wait in the Lord shall inherit the earth. Evil doers will be cut off and the meek will inherit the earth. What does this mean? We know it does not mean Israel will be given the entire earth for that was never promised. We also know it was never God's intention to give His people this earth as an inheritance at the end. We look for a new heavens and a new earth created after this one is destroyed. What use will an earth of dust be to a "heavenly man." We have been made of the dust of this earth, but we will bear the image of a heavenly one.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 1 Cor 15:48-49

Jesus promised the meek an inheritance. Here it He promised the earth, later eternal life and all things. Why read anymore into it than this?

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. Mt 19:29-30

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 1 Cor 15:50-51

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ... 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ... 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, Rev 21:1, 5-7

- 1 Is there a single word in English that can define the Greek word "meek?"
- 2 What does the Greek word convey that is absent in English?
- 3 What does the horse still have after it is broken and meek?
- 4 Kittel explains meek as _____ and _____ friendliness.
- 5 Aristotle thought meekness was the perfect use of what emotion?
- 6 The rightful use for anger in a meek person is seen in Moses. Why did his anger wax hot?
- 7 How does Jesus asking us to "go the second mile" helps us better understand meekness?
- 8 Will meekness allow us to be wronged, accept it, and respond with kindness?
- 9 What did Jesus do during His trials and crucifixion that helps us understand meekness?
- 10 When Aaron and Miriam questioned Moses authority, what did God say about Moses' meekness?
- 11 How are we to be meek when speaking to an erring brother?
- 12 Is it easy to understand how the meek will inherit the earth?
- 13 What do the Jehovah's Witnesses use this passage to prove?
- 14 What have others used this passage to prove?
- 15 Did God promise Israel they would inherit the earth or the land of Canaan?
- 16 Did the Holy Spirit reveal that this earth would be burned up?
- 17 Does God promise we will inherit a new earth.