Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Lowly Walk, Part 5
Scripture: Ephesians 4:2
Code: 1923

1978

I invite you now for our Bible study to turn with me to the 4th chapter of Ephesians, as we continue in our study of this tremendous epistle written by the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We at Grace Church are totally committed to the absolute authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the Word of God, and so without apology we go about our business every week of teaching it, verse by verse and this is what we've done for the ten years plus that I've been here, and as long as God gives me breath this is what we're committed to continue to do is to teach you the Word of God.

And in our current study of the Book of Ephesians, we find ourselves in the 4th chapter, the first three verses. really the first six verses are a unit and we could entitle the whole unit, "The Lowly Walk of Our High position." The first three chapters of Ephesians dealing with our position and now the last three with our walk, and Paul introduces that in the opening of this chapter.

Now I realize that this is the second time that I've gone through Ephesians, the first time was nine years ago, and some ah, changes are being made, it's taking me longer to go through than it did then. That's partly because I know more than I did then. But there's another thought too. I'm always interested in the response I get to my messages I, I...sometimes I'd like to get out of here before there can be any response because I have a good idea what it'll be, but, but I always kind of keep one ear open to that, but it's very interesting that as. as I do this usually I get opposite responses to everything. Some people will say to me you know that's really wonderful and appreciate that message, it so ministered to me.

As soon as they walk by another person will come up and say, did you feel poorly today? You didn't seem like you were yourself, it just ...something was missing. You know you just really don't know and so it kind of tends to cancel itself out. But it was interesting to me the last couple of weeks, I realize that I haven't been going very fast, in fact ah, we've been in the first couple of verses here for weeks and, and uhm, that's amazing but uhm, it's interesting to see the response. Last week I intended to preach the message that I'll go ahead and preach this morning, if I get done with this introduction, but ah, ha, uhm, I didn't I just digressed and I just kind of shared my heart and I've done that now three or four times since I was away in Brazil and, and even before that God was doing some things in my

own heart and, and ah, it's been interesting because some people will write me and I - got a wonderful letter, I picked one up even in my little box this morning it said, thank you so much for stopping in the midst of this to share the things that are on your heart and make it practical, God has really ministered to me. I got a...two or three letters this week, God's changing my life, last week's sermon I needed, it was right for me and so forth and so forth. And then I got another letter ah, where somebody says, I feel that I have to tell you we like the way you used to be, would you please go back to preaching the way you used to preach. And, and so you know you just...you have ambivalent feelings, but I thought I ought to stop and kind of explain something to you. Preaching for me is not a performance, it is not simply a matter of, of pulling out a sermon and standing up here and giving it, and you ought to be glad that it isn't because whenever the man is detached from the message there's a lostness there. Uhm, preaching for me is, is, is not something that I just can and, and just get up and uncan, you know? Crack open the top and then load it on you. Preaching for me is a sharing of the work of God in my heart, and if I get stuck at a certain point, I'm stuck there because God has me stuck there.

If I sound like a broken record I'm the broken record, and God has me stuck at a certain place until I learn what I need to learn there so that I can be the man that I ought to be to you, and that's a lot better than giving you a canned message. And so in a sense ah, I'm willing to allow God to stop me in my tracks and to let...and to give me things to say that I don't plan to say because maybe those are the things He knows that I need to be that I'm not yet, so that I can be all to you that I need to be. I realize that my responsibility to you is not to show up here on Sunday morning and give a performance, my responsibility to you is to be a shepherd of the sheep, and to lead you, to guide you in the Word of God, but more than that to set an example, to set a pattern for you and until I learn some of these things deeply in my life, until I come into conformity to some of these things I, I can't do that as I should do it. So if I am a broken record then you'll have to allow God to repair me, and if it gets stuck on the same track for a little while God's working in my life and ah, I'm like you are you know, thank God... ah, or you'll have to pardon me, thank God He's not finished with me yet. There's still things going on in my life, I don't think any of you for a moment believe that I'm finished, that God has made me and I'm all set and everything is fine and I'm a finished product. I'm in the process of becoming, just like you are and I'm learning just like you learn, and I learn in big clumps each week.

But there are in the midst of all those sermons that I plan and all those wonderful homiletics and those great illustrations I think up.

God may have a message for me in there and I get stuck on that one thing. But that's the way God works in my heart. And I'll tell you something, one thing I can't do, I cannot just go back over a book that I've gone over before and say the same things over again because there's no challenge for me, there's absolutely no challenge in that at all. The challenge for me comes in the undiscovered realities, it comes in the applications I never saw before, comes in the dimensions that God never showed me before, and so those are the things I dig for. You know the older you get the longer your

books get, when you write, because the more there is there. You know I, I...you read a book about God written by a 22 year old person, it'll be about that big.

You read a book about God written by a 95 year old man who's walked with Him it would be like that. There's so much there and the deeper and deeper you go into God's truth and the more you know God the more reality there is, and by the way too, the more you live as a Christian the more the terms of the Bible expand for you. So that there was a time when I could say 10 minutes on the word meekness and cover everything I knew and more. But now I'll be lucky if in 45 minutes this morning I can tell you one fifth of what's in me about meekness. But meekness is a God, is a God given reality that you must understand. It's more important that you learn the significance of the truth than that the homily exist, do you understand what I'm saying? I'm not trying to justify what I'm doing, I'm just trying to tell you that it's being done, I trust in God's good time as He keeps me challenged in the discovery of things in His Word and as He refines me in the places I need to be refined.

You will notice that I go fast over some things, maybe those are the things I've learned already and are going pretty good in my life, I get stuck where I need to be stuck, and maybe it's true that we all need to get stuck there together, so let's get stuck in Ephesians 4:1 to 3 again this morning.

Paul begins, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This great text on the worthy walk really deserves our diligent faithful study, because it reveals a basic truth that we need to consider, this is it, the Christian life is not a matter of what you do first, it is a matter of who you are.

That's the heart of it all. And you'll notice here that Paul says, "walk worthy." And walking as we've been saying is the, is the idea of daily conduct, it's the idea of daily living, it's the idea of daily life. What you do, how you live. But it's most interesting to me that when he says, walk worthy, here's how, he never discusses an action, he never discusses a work and he never discusses a deed all be ever discusses is an attitude. Because the worthy walk is not so much a matter of what you do as it is of what you are. There are plenty of people who can do the deeds and not be the person.

That's the hypocrisy that the Bible talks about. It is possible to have what I call action fruit, the action fruit, the fruit of the lips, praise in Hebrews, the fruit of, of unselfishness, giving, Philippians 4, the fruit of Romans 1, winning someone to Christ, the fruit of Colossians, all good works, it's possible to have the action fruit without the attitude fruit. Do you know what the attitude fruit is? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, that's attitude fruit, now watch, if you have action fruit without attitude fruit that's legalism. If you have action fruit first of all, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control that produces action fruit that's true spirituality. And so when God talks about the worthy walk it doesn't begin with the action, that's going to come later in the chapter, it begins with the attitude, do you understand that? Our Christian life

works this way, it starts with the Holy Spirit, He works through the attitude and the attitude produces the action, so what happens? Walk worthy, what does that mean Paul? It means lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing love and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Those are all attitudes, those are all inner graces. You know for many Christians they miss this altogether, ah, for many Christians really walking the Christian walk, really living the Christian life means going to church or putting money in the offering or owning and even occasionally reading a Bible, or not swearing or not drinking or not committing a crime or, or whatever and we...there are many people who see that external definition of prescription behavior as the, the fact of Christianity when that is simply the manifestation of it. The Biblical issue is not what we do apart from what we are, it is what we are that results in what we do and that's what God is after. So Paul says, walk worthy, and he is speaking then immediately after that of the attitudes that make it possible.

Now to give you the outline that we started with here, the first verse we call the call to the worthy walk, in verse 1 Paul simply gives a, an exhortation based on the first three chapters calling us to walk worthy. Then in verses 2 and 3 we have the characteristics of the worthy walk, if we are to walk worthy, what are the characteristics, how does it manifest itself? And here he gives five inner attitudes. Then he closes in verses 4 to 6 this opening session with the cause of the worthy walk, the call, the characteristics and the cause of the worthy walk.

Now what have we found? We've looked at the call to the worthy walk and seen that its urgency is based upon who we are, "therefore," in verse 1. We then looked at the characteristics of the worthy walk, verses 2 and 3. And I told you there are five inner graces that will manifest a worthy life, five things that lead us to walk worthy. The first one we discussed in our last two sessions was "all lowliness," verse 2, "all lowliness," and we said that means total humility. The worthy walk begins with total humility. We said that total humility is the absence of self, the absence of selfishness, it's the bottom line on Christian living, it's the bottom line on walking worthy. And I told you last week, do you remember, about all the ways that Satan tempts us to be proud, and how we must resist in all those areas? You know, you remember when I was talking about the one of spiritual pride and I said you could come to Grace Church and if you had a New American Standard Bible with tabs in it and a little red notebook you could play the part? Well you know I didn't want you to misunderstand that, I was afraid there would be a big rush on King James Bibles and brown notebooks in the book store, so nobody could be accused of being a hypocrite.

That wasn't the point, I'm not accusing people of being hypocrites for doing that I'm saying it's easy for someone to kind of parade a little bit, if there's certain little ways they can sort of dawn the attire. By the way I have to share this letter with you, somebody apparently ah, responding to that very statement, I don't know if I said it in both services but I made the statement you know if you...that you could pretend to be spiritual if you just had the right Bible and the right notebook and looked like you really were involved and, and it, and it could be that that was purely external and that's true, and I'm not saying that when you do that that it is external, I'm just saying it's possible that it could be. And so

someone wrote me a letter and this is what is says, "Dear John, the Bible I have before me is a precious gift from my daughter, less than three years ago, just before I understood and deeply committed my life to our Lord Jesus Christ. The cover has been handmade in leather, there is a personal touch of love in this gift that is very special to me. Inside, stuffed into its torn binding there are written personal and precious thoughts the Lord and I have shared together.

Some pages and books are so marked with tender notations of awesome awareness seen for the very first time that the Word itself is difficult to see. Written on the inside cover are names and dates of seven family members who have new life in Christ Jesus. There are tear stains wrinkling the pages of Scripture where He has gently exposed still another of my sins, where His incredible love has restored me again. My Bible is The New American Standard, now that I look at it, it is the larger size. Sometimes it is awkward, heavy and makes creases in my dress, but it never seems to matter. It mirrors my dearest friend. Oh yes John, it has tabs too. How else could I hope to stay with you? Everything about the Bible is new to me, it is important to me that I turn with you to every Scripture, if what you're teaching is what God has said it doesn't matter so much that I understand it all at that moment, the important fact is that it strengthens my faith in God and in you as my teacher. Among these treasures too is a little red Grace notebook, it contains notes that refresh my memory as I reread the Scripture, these notes represent hours and hours of your dedication to our Lord God Himself, His church, Grace family. There are expressions of deep concern for all people, there is evident always the love you have for your wife and children, your careful study leads those of us yet babes along a straight lighted path of understanding His Word. Am I to be marked with spiritual pride because I carry these aids to my learning? I come as a little child before God, before you, eager, enthusiastic, ready to be taught, this could become a stumbling block to me, risking the impression that these implements of learning will be seen as spiritual pride or will they just label me a new Christian not yet fundamentally able or rooted sufficiently to come to church not needing such crutches? Thank God for the clear teaching John, I'm still here learning from you, big New American Standard Bible with tabs in hand, confident my Lord knows my heart and that I am seeking first His Kingdom." And it's unsigned. You know that's just the reality that makes the hypocrisy so bad, isn't it? That's the reality.

I'm not questioning that reality at all, I thank God for the kind of humility that makes us truly submit to the authority and the power of the Word of God, and I thank God for that letter, whoever wrote it and I'm sure a thousand times over it can be reduplicated by those of you who humbly come to seek God at His Word and who take notes in order that you might learn indelibly the things that God is teaching, and I certainly commend you for that. God bless you, every one, keep your red notebook and your New American Standard Bible.

So we talked about humility, let's go to the second word here in verse 2, "With all lowliness and meekness." Humility produces meekness, these five virtues are progressive, one produces the other you cannot have meekness without humility. There's no such combination as pride and meekness,

meekness does not go along with pride they are mutually exclusive, meekness is a by-product of humility.

Where there is humility there will inevitably be meekness, where there is meekness there will be long-suffering, where there is long-suffering there will be "forbearing one another in love," and where those occur there will be the "keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is a progressive thing, this is a moving to the goal. So we see then that he calls us to meekness.

If we are to walk worthy as the exalted sons of the King, if we are to walk worthy as children of God, as heirs of the Kingdom, as inheritors of all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies forever, we are to do that in meekness. Now what is meekness? It's interesting how, how the world defines it, because the world doesn't understand it. The dictionary said, "Meekness is a deficiency in courage.

Or a deficiency of spirit." And you see humanly speaking meekness comes out that way. Now if you look at Eph...er at Galatians 5 you see that meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. When true meekness is produced by the Spirit of God it is a, it is a valuable virtue, it is a critical virtue, but the attitude of human meekness apart from the energy of the Holy Spirit is seen by the world as cowardice or timidity or lack of strength. But that's not the Bible term. Let's talk about what it means. If I am to be meek...listen beloved you can't even walk the worthy walk without humility and you cannot walk the worthy walk without meekness so you'd better learn what meekness is, so we're going to take the time this morning to see. Meekness, prautes. from the, the form praus. Praus is the word meekness, it refers basically to something that is mild and gentle. It means to be gentle hearted, mild. The opposite of uhm' of a person who is vengeful, who seeks revenge or who seeks retaliation or who seeks vindictiveness or who, who harbors bitterness or resentment or reacts against others. In fact it is a...it is the opposite of vengeance, it is often defined that way, the opposite of vengeance or the opposite of violence. We might say it is a quiet willing submission to God, a quiet willing submission to others without the rebellion and the revenge and the retaliation and the self-assertion that characterizes a natural man. Now let me get into the definition a little further. It is a mild, gentle, non-retaliating, non-vindictive, non-vengeful, nonviolent spirit. It is used in secular language in several ways in some of the ancient Greek sources, it is used to speak of a soothing medicine like a tranquilizer, it is, it is used to speak of something that calms and soothes the spirit. It is used also of a gentle breeze, the light cool breeze that would waft across the warm hillside and cool the people there. It is used also to speak of a broken colt who is now tame and docile and who's power and energy can be channeled for purposes of benefit. So it is a word that speaks of gentleness of a soothing of a calming kind of a thing. The secular Greeks used it for people who they said were friendly or tenderhearted or pleasant or mild or gentle as opposed to hard, rough, coarse, violent. It's a sense of quietness. In...it is characteristic most of all of Jesus Christ. In Second Corinthians 10:1 Paul spoke of the meekness of Christ. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He came riding on the colt, the foal of an ass, not a great white steed with a fanfare but meekly, quietly riding on the colt, the foal of an ass, the dumbest beast of burden, the most common animal,

emphasizing His meekness. Christ was meek. It is a godly characteristic, in fact in Zephaniah chapter 2 verse 3 the Holy Spirit says, Seek meekness. Seek meekness.

Now the term is used at least twelve times in the New Testament, prautes. Meekness as a virtue is extolled in the New Testament ah, we could call your attention to Galatians 5:23 the fruit of the Spirit, meekness. In First Timothy we find a wonderful insight, "But thou, O man of God," if you're to be a real man of God, and here again it's almost like the worthy walk, if you're to really live the life, it says, "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness." But I think it's so important to add this, meekness doesn't mean you're a coward because the very next sentence is, "Fight the good fight of faith." Listen a meek person is anything but a coward, a meek person will fight at the drop of a hat over the right cause, a meek person even gets mad, he gets angry, he gets hot, he gets indignant over the right cause.

Meekness is a mild, quiet, gentle, pleasant spirit; it is a soothing, non-vengeful, non-retaliating, non-vindictive, non- bitter, non-reacting, non-defensive, non-self-assertive spirit, except when it ought to get angry. And then meekness really gets hot. And I'll show you when that is in a few moments. The word is also used in James chapter 5 and verse 13, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?" Who's really wise? You say, the man with a Ph.D. No. Or the man who has studied all the books. No. A wise man, a man with real knowledge, "Let him show it out of a good life his works with meekness." It's the meek man, he's the wise one, the one who is meek. "The wisdom that is from above," verse 17 says, "is first pure, then peaceable, meek, easy to be entreated." So meekness is a virtue extolled over and over and over in the New Testament. It is not the absence of anger, not at all because he says in one time meekness and turns right around the next phrase says fight the good fight of faith. It fights, meekness fights. But watch this, meekness we could say is power under control, power under control.

When you have humility, now watch, humility is self-emptying, true humility divests myself of myself. I'm not interested in my own causes, I'm not interested in my own successes, I'm not interested in my own fame, I'm not interested in my own gain, I'm not interested in my own reputation, I have divested myself of myself, then meekness is a by-product, it is a by-product of a broken will, of a brokenness before God. But it is not the destruction of the lion, it is the taming of the lion, do you understand that? It is not the destruction of the lion but the taming of the lion. All of his strength is there, all of his power is there, all of his energy is there, all of his potential is there, but it is at the control of the master. Quite a different thing to see a lion running free in the continent of Africa, than to see a lion under the control of the lion tamer at the circus, that lion with all the same ferocity, the same energy, the same will, the same power, the same strength but always under the control of the master. And so it is with meekness, no longer does the lion in you and the lion in me seek its own gain. No longer does it seek its own prey, no longer does it seek its own causes, no longer does it run free to accomplish its own ends, but it is submissive to the control of the Master, it is not losing its power, it is harnessing its power. The same is true of the illustration in the secular Greek of the horse, as long as the colt runs

wild and free its power is out of control and it serves no ends, when its power is brought under control it can be used for gainful purposes.

When the wind blows in a hurricane force it has no function but to destroy but when it blows in a quiet breeze it catches the windmill and the windmill pumps the water that, that, that causes the crop to be watered that feeds the masses of humanity. And so it is that when power is under control it is useful. There is within the heart of the believer a lion and that lion has every right to roar and that lion has every right to react and that lion has every right to pounce but not on those things at is own discretion but only under the direction of the one who rules its will, the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Don't you think for a moment that meekness is indifference or cowardice or weakness or a fearfulness. It is not. It is not impotent, it is not cowardly. Jesus was not impotent and nor was He cowardly, but Jesus was meek. Let me tell you something, did you know that you have the right to get mad? That's right, you have every right to be angry. In fact in Ephesians 4:26 it says, "Be ye angry," did you ever know that? Now be sure you quote the rest of the verse, "and sin not." It's all right to be angry but not to sin, which says there's a certain kind of anger that isn't sin, right?

There is an anger that is not sin. You say, “what anger is that?”

It is the right kind of anger, being angry for the right reason, you can be angry for the right reason or the wrong reason. In one case it's power under control, in another case it's power out of control. The Bible knows about these two options, in fact in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 28 we read about power out of control, Proverbs 25:28 says this, "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Here is a totally out of control spirit, out of control and consequently vulnerable, falls into every pit, every temptation, every failure, every weakness, he has no self- control, he has no rule over his own spirit, that's anger out of control, power out of control, not meekness. On the other hand backing up in Proverbs to the 16th chapter the - 32nd verse it says this, "He who rules his spirit, is better than he that takes a city." So Proverbs 16 is a person who rules his spirit, in other words the spirit is there, the power is there, the lion is there, the energy is there, the potential is there.

But it's under control. On the other hand the same power, the same energy, the same strength out of control creates nothing but chaos and sinfulness. People who get angry at everything, out of control, know nothing of meekness. Meek people control their energies, control their strengths, they control the lion in them so that it only pounces when it should, it only roars when it should.

Now let me give you some further things before we get into Biblical pictures. When Aristotle discussed these things he gave us some very helpful definitions of the words in his day that help us to know what the Bible word means. In writing in ethics, his, his work on ethics he talked about this. For Aristotle, this is what he believed, the virtues of life, those are the good things, the virtues, the right attitudes of life were defined as the middle between the excess and the deficiency. On this side is the

absence of something, over here is the excess of it and the virtue is in the middle. And he went on to give many illustrations of that, for example Aristotle said this, "Courage is the virtue in the middle between cowardice, which is the deficiency of courage and foolhardiness which is the excess of courage." In other words a person who is too courageous is going to get himself killed, his foolishness, a person who has no courage is nothing but a sniveling coward, the virtue is in the middle.

Aristotle said, “Generosity for example is a virtue, it is the virtue between stingy selfishness and wastefulness, generosity is the virtue in the middle.” Then Aristotle said, "Meekness is the virtue in the middle between indifference, unconcern, weakness, cowardice, and excessive explosive anger." Meekness is in the middle. Aristotle said, and I quote, "The meek man is angry on the right occasion, with the right people, at the right moment and for the right length of time." End quote. Power under control. It's not a past...you say, ohh, I'm meek, so I, I just, I can't...certainly get into that, I, I know it's an awful thing and those people have sinned and, and there's many evil practices but I...my meekness refrains me from speaking. That's not meekness, that's just stupidity. Meekness doesn't make you back away from sin, it doesn't make you cease to condemn evil. Now watch, it is anger under control, now under the control of whom? God. Meekness is when I take the lion in me and submit it to God so that it only gets angry about that which offends God not me, do you see it? The lion roars in defense of God not in defense of me. If somebody wants to step on me that's all right, if somebody offends me that's all right, if somebody does something to me that's all right, there is no retaliation, there is no revenge, there is no self-seeking. As John Bunyan said, "He who is already lying down needs fear no fall." There's nowhere to fall. I'm already there I seek nothing for myself, but the lion roars in me when God is maligned, you see? That's holy indignation, that's righteous indignation, and I want you to understand that meekness is that quiet spirit that is non-defensive, non-retaliating, non- vengeful, non-self-seeking but when God is dishonored that same spirit stands up and roars and exercises its power. It is a holy indignation under the control of God, it reacts when it ought to react at the right time, for the right reasons and for the right length of time.

Jesus had it, Jesus who said, "I am meek and lowly at heart." Jesus of whom it was said, He came riding on the colt, the foal of an ass meek and lowly, Zechariah 9:9, He would come so meek. Jesus who seemed so quiet, who avoided the conflict so often. Jesus of whom blessed Peter said, "When he was reviled he reviled not again." And when He was persecuted He did not retaliate or seek revenge. Jesus, that quiet and meek spirit, the same Jesus who when God the Father was dishonored walked into the temple, made a whip and started whipping men in the back and started throwing tables over and knocking over chairs and spilling money and chasing animals, and said, “get out of here, you have turned My Father's house into a den of thieves and it is to be a house of prayer.” The same Jesus, meek and quiet spirit in dealing with people who when He confronted the, the filthy hypocrisy of the Pharisees blistered them from one side to the other and called them whited sepulchers, white washed on the outside and inside full of dead men's bones. Listen this is the same meek and lowly Jesus, watch it, the key is this, Jesus never spoke a vengeful word or a retaliating

word or a word of - condemnation or judgment against anyone for something they had done to Him. He spoke it only in reference to how they treated God, and He set an example. Peter says in First Peter 2, "Christ has suffered, setting an example for us." And what is the example? "That when he was reviled, he reviled not again." When He was condemned He did not become vengeful. Now you see Him with a whip in the temple, and He's cleaning the temple because it is a defiling of the Father's house. But when His own temple was defiled, hanging on the cross and the nails were driven through and His body was dripping with blood and spit and sweat and they were mocking Him all He had to say to them then was, "Father," what? "forgive them, they don't know what they do." See? That's meekness, that's power under control, it's total selflessness. Jesus never reacted to that which came against Him only that which came against the Father. In the garden, they came to capture Him in Matthew chapter 26, it would have been so easy for Jesus to have pulled off a wonder of all wonders. It says that He had the power, if He wished to call the angels of heaven to His aid. Jesus said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Conservatively speaking nearly uhm, a hundred thou...seventy-five thousand angels, do you know how powerful that is? Well look at the Old Testament, one angel slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians. Listen, Jesus said, I could with one word to My Father have twelve legions of angels here in a snap. But not in defense of Himself, He wouldn't do it, not in defense of Himself. That's meekness. Meekness will take a whip and defend God against those who desecrate His name, it will be angry, it will be so angry that its eyes will be fiery, but meekness will not as much as lift its own finger for vengeance against that which comes to itself. You know it's so easy this...to be tempted this way, when somebody says something about me that's critical or something you know, you feel that inside temptation, boy, you know? I'll tell them, who do they think they are, touching God's anointed? You know? Hey, you get...see? Or when somebody does something to you, you know or...people keep running into our cars lately. You, you know your first reaction is, boy I'm going to get every penny out of that bird, see? That's what you start to feel inside, then you need to say, that's not the thing to be angry about, not what my neighbor does to me, not...what happens to me doesn't matter. Meekness says I only retaliate...the lion only roars when God is the issue, see? Boy, that's when you're living right. You can't be offended, meekness cannot be offended, did you get that?

There's nothing to defend, because we're nothing.

Another illustration of meekness as power under control would be David. In First Samuel 24 you don't need to turn to it, I'll just wrap these thoughts up. In, in First Samuel 24 David was running from Saul, remember that? Saul was chasing David, David knew he was king he was anointed king, I mean he knew he was to be the king and Saul was a rotten king and it was only a matter of time, it was inevitable. And David and his men were hiding in a cave, remember the story? And in First Samuel 24 Saul came. What an opportunity, one shot in the old heart and that was it. David knew he had the right to reign, David knew that Saul had chased him all over the place, tried to kill him, tried to destroy the wonderful love relationship he had with Jonathan, tried to devastate his whole life. He ma...you

know normally a man would have been so vengeful to Saul, have hated what Saul did to him, make him run like an animal all over the wilderness that he would have taken that opportunity and figure he had every right of God, he would have said, boy God You must have put him in here, I'm going to get him while I got him. And David's men said to him, do it David, do it.

But David wouldn't do it, David went over to Saul, took his knife and cut a piece of his robe off, just so Saul would know he was there, and could have done it, but didn't do it. He had the power, he had the right, but his power was under the control of submission to God, he would never do anything in vengeance for himself, only would he defend God. And in Psalm 69:9 David said, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the reproaches that have fallen on you are fallen on me." He says, God when I get angry it's because You are dishonored. He never defended himself. In Second Samuel 16 David's son Absalom that evil rebellious, vile son tried to defeat his own father as king, and David had to run for his life, and Da...David is running for his life out in the wilderness and Absalom is trying to put up a, a new government and undermine his own father, and David was the laughingstock of some people because he ran from his own son. And during that time one of Saul's men by the name of Shimei found David and he started to curse at David, and he mocked David and he threw rocks at him. David was the king, God's anointed.

But he was so humbled by this that this man was cursing him and mocking him and throwing pebbles at him, and Abishai, David's nephew said to David, David you just tell me the word and I'll chop his head off.

David said, let him alone. That's power under control. Never vengeful for himself, sought nothing for himself. He would act with his army to fight for God's causes, he wouldn't touch one person for his own sake, not one. That's meekness. Now you know as well as I do that Saul would have this guy Shimei if he'd have been throwing rocks at him. The difference is this, they both had the power, one had it under control, one had it out of control. One was like a fortified city according to Proverbs, one was like one with no walls. That's meekness. You know that one time Saul...Saul was so out of control at one time according to First Samuel i4 Saul was going to kill his own son on a minor issue just to prove his power. On the other hand, when David's son rebelled against him, David said he would rather die for Absalom's sake, Second Samuel 18:33, that's the difference.

Saul wouldn't let himself be offended by anybody, even his own son he'd kill him first, David could be offended by everybody, even his own son and lose his own life first, that's the difference. Power under control. The spirit that makes a man bow low before God, think nothing of himself.

The greatest Old Testament illustration of meekness is Moses, and I want you to see this as we wrap up our thoughts, Moses, listen to this statement, I'm going to read it to you, Numbers 12:S you don't need to turn to it, just listen, Numbers 12:3 says, "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were on the face of the earth." End quote. Isn't that great? The meekest man that ever lived. He

was meek. Now when you think of Moses you don't think of Casper Milquetoast, you don't think of some puny little character going around mumbling under his beard. You think of fearlessness, you think of boldness, you think of combativeness, you think of a confrontive, courageous man with conviction, of a great dynamic powerful leader. You see that man with explosions of anger from one end of his career to the other, don't you? Why his whole career came when he saw ah, an Egyptian person abusing a Jew and he killed him, remember that? He blew up at him and he just took his life, he was so furious. You see him in the 5th chapter of Exodus, after he's been refined by God in the wilderness, and he walks right in there into the presence of pharaoh the greatest monarch existent in the world, he faces pharaoh face to face, looks him in the eye and says, Pharaoh, let my people go. And he wasn't afraid to face him and he wasn't afraid to command him, and he wasn't afraid to make a demand.

Godly fearlessness, godly boldness. In Exodus chapter 32 he finds Israel in idolatry, he finds them in debauchery and in absolute fury he smashes the law of God, and he scathes and rebukes, fearless man.

Bold, combative, confrontive. We see him in the outburst of righteous anger, certainly not timid cowardice. Listen, Moses was fearless, he took a life of an Egyptian, he was fearless in confronting Pharaoh, he was fearless in confronting the people of God in their sin, he went through his life exercising authority over a couple million people, he was a bold, strong man, yet the Bible says he was the meekest man that ever lived, why? Because his strength was always amassed in reaction to God's honor, never in defense of himself, do you see? In fact he had no confidence in himself, none at all. In the third chapter of Exodus when God came to him and called him, he said, who am I that I should lead this people? Who am I? And in Exodus chapter 4 God says you can't but I can, and He gave him a rod, and he had the rod of God in his hand, and he was nothing but the rod of God was everything and from that time on the rod of God is always in his hand and when he does something with the rod things happened, right? It was like a constant symbol of the fact that Moses was nothing and the rod was everything.

Paul was some, somewhat the same way. Paul said in Philippians 3:3 I cannot trust the flesh. But he said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." He was saying what Moses said, I can't but You can. Listen, meekness never reacts for its own sake, but only for God. Paul never defended himself, Paul never rebuked anybody for what they did to him, he never retaliated, he never fired back in vengeance, only when God was dishonored. And so it was with Moses, and so it was most of all with Jesus Christ. And He did it as an example to us, it is His meekness that we must emulate.

Let me ask you some questions in closing. How do you know if you're meek? How do you know if you're meek? I'll give you some practical questions, ask yourself this, do you experience self- control?

That's question number one. Is your anger, your power, your energy always under control? Proverbs 16:32. Do you rule your own spirit or do you find yourself being victimized by flying off the handle?

Boy, he can't do that to me, who does that guy think he is? When, when your wife says something to you that could start an argument, do you get right in there, defending yourself? You're wrong, I'm telling you, was not my fault, you know do you come right back? Or are you always under control? A meek person, power under control. The only time the lion roars is in defense of God. Rather says Paul in First Corinthians, suffer wrong, suffer wrong, take it. Second question, are you angry only when God is dishonored? Are you angry only when God is dishonored? No other time. You know I get angry? I mean I get hot angry sometimes. People who know me know that, I get really angry. But you know the things that make me angry are the things that - - that dishonor God, that mar His reputation, that despise His name, that's what makes me angry. I get angry over sin, I get angry over perversion of the Word of God, I get angry over false doctrines, I get angry over false teachers, I get angry over those who would claim to know Christ and do not, I get angry over those kinds of things. I get angry...a little boy came to me after the service, just a little guy and he walked up to me and he heard all I said, he listened so intently, and he said to me, he said, “Mr. MacArthur,” he said, “we were up at General Sherman Tree on our vacation,” and he said, “a man next to me took God's name in vain,” he said, “was it okay for me to get mad at that?” I said, “yeah.” That's what we ought to get angry about. Now we ought to be careful that we exhort those who oppose us in love and in meekness, but we have every right for the lion to roar when God is dishonored. Third question, do you respond to the Word of God humbly no matter what it says? James 1:21 says, "You are to receive the engrafted word with meekness." Do you respond to the Word of God meekly? Saying if that's what it says I submit, I obey. So do you experience self-control, are you angry only when God is dishonored, do you respond to the Word of God humbly? A fourth question, do you always make peace? Meek people do. They always make peace. Right here it says, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

That's what meekness will do. If somebody falls do you condemn them, gossip about them, talk about them? If they do something wrong do you talk about it under the guise that we've got to discuss this spiritual problem? Or are you the one who it says in Galatians 6:4, "When a brother's taken in a fault, you restore such an one with meekness." Uh-huh, that's what you're to do. Are you a peacemaker?

Meek people are, they don't make fights they end them. They don't start arguments they finish them. Another question, do you receive criticism without retaliation, whether it's right or wrong? Do you receive criticism without retaliation, whether it's right or wrong?

Boy this is a practical lesson, oh-ho. I work on this one hard.

Somebody writes to me and just lets me have it up one side and down the other, the Spirit has teached me to write back and say, thank you for your criticism, I know God will use it in my life, pray for me, God love you, and sign my name. Can you take criticism whether it's right or wrong, without retaliation? Another question, a final one, do you have the right attitude toward the unsaved? You know uhm, Peter says, "We are to give an answer to every man that asks us the reason of the hope within us, with meekness and fear." Do you know what he means? It's so easy for Christians to get smug, lofty, think we've arrived. And you start thinking about sinners as if they're , what do they know, stupid people, and you begin to look down on them, you get proud, and you get kind of defensive, you know, doesn't he know I'm a child of God, he can't treat me like that, see. On the other hand meekness. Those are some questions that might help you. Do you have self-control? Are you angry only when God is dishonored? Do you respond to the Word humbly no matter what it says? Do you always make peace? Do you receive criticism without retaliation whether it's right or wrong? Do you have the right attitude toward the unsaved? Do you look at them and say, oh God, they're probably better than I, that I should be saved? That's what meekness says.

Listen, Lloyd-Jones says, "To be meek means you have finished with yourself altogether." Nobody can harm you anymore because you're not important. The worst men could say of you is probably true. And most significantly beloved this is how Christ was. Listen, the one who made the world, the one who flung the billion galaxies into space, the one who calls every star by name, the one who preserves the innumerable orbits in their courses, the one who weighs the mountains in a balance and the hills on a scale, the one who takes up the islands as a very small thing, the one who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand, the one before whom the inhabitants of the world are as grasshoppers, this one says, "I am meek and lowly."

Can you do less? And so Peter says in First Peter 3:4, "That we are to be adorned," listen to it, "with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great value." Humility leads to meekness. Next time we'll see what meekness leads to. Let's pray.

Lord we, we want to, to know these things and we want to live them. We want You to take the truths and drive them down deep into our very life, so that these are not theory but life. We desire to be humble and meek, help us to obey that we may be what we should be and we even ask You to do what You need to do to prod us to humility and meekness, selflessness, that the result may be long-suffering, forbearing love and the unity of the Spirit which will fulfill the prayer of Jesus that we be one, and will manifest the beauty of the church to the whole world. So work in our hearts to that end, in Christ's name. Amen.

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