

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

Happy Are the Meek

Scripture: Matthew 5:5

Code: 2200

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5. I always think that the book I’m studying at the present time is the most wonderful thing I’ve ever studied, and I definitely feel that way about Matthew. I don’t know how messages we’ve given in Matthew, maybe 25 or so. And they have been so exciting and so thrilling to me. And now as we’re looking at Chapter 5, the wonderful sermon of our Lord Jesus Christ called “the Sermon on the Mount,” I find myself literally overwhelmed by the truth that’s in it.

I feel like when I come in here, you’re seeing a tip of an iceberg because I can’t even begin to touch all of the things that are happening in my heart and mind day after day after day as I expose myself to the truth of this tremendous passage. If I’m obedient to God, if I respond to the Holy Spirit as he wants me to respond in this study, I’m going to be a different person and that’ll be refreshing to me and I’m sure to you, also.

The statement that our Lord makes in verse, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” is a shocking statement to the audience that heard him say it. In fact, all three Beatitudes, as they are known, are shocking. The first two were shocking to the audience that sat on the hillside the day Jesus spoke. Jesus called for things absolutely foreign to their thinking. They knew how to be spiritually proud. They knew how to be self sufficient. They knew how to play the pious role. They knew about religion. They were really good with form. They thought they were the “in” group. They thought they could survive on their own strength and their own wisdom and their own might and their own resources.

And they expected the Messiah, when he arrived, to say to them “I’m here to commend you for your great religiosity. I’m here to commend you for your wonderful spirituality. I’m here to announce to you that God has looked down from heaven and he’s very well pleased with you. In fact, we can just go right on into the kingdom. Very little change is necessary.” But our Lord opened up his ministry to them and said this in verse 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Not those who think they’re righteous, but those who know they’re sinners.

“Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.” Not those who are happy with themselves, but those who are sad about themselves. “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Not those who are proud, but those who are humble. They didn’t understand this. This isn’t what they expected. They had banked everything on their spirituality, on their pride. And Jesus undermined it all

the first time he spoke. That he wanted a broken spirit. He wanted a mourning heart. He wanted humility that was necessary to enter his kingdom.

No self righteousness, no spiritual pride, and when Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek," he must - if there were any people left unshocked, this must - have done it. "Blessed are the meek." I mean, that would be shocking to our society because we're not unlike they are. We think the victory and the spoils belong to the strong, see? Go get it. Grab all the gusto. Macho. What a jolt to their thinking.

Let me set the scene for you. A little over a half century before Jesus was born in 63 BC, Pompey had annexed Palestine for Rome. And thus Jewish independence came to an end. And by the way, that independence had been gained in a blood bath revolution called the Maccabean Revolution. And they had fought to be free from Greece. And it wasn't very long that they knew that freedom until they were under the bondage of the imperial power of Rome.

From then on, from 63 BC on, the land was ruled partly through Herodian kings. The Herodians were a family. It's like a last name. They were a family of kings appointed by Caesar. And in addition to the Herodian kings - and he gave the people in Palestine kings because they were big on kings, but in addition to that - he gave them procurators or governors, the most famous of whom is, to us, Pilate.

And so they were all this time under Roman domination of these puppet kings, and the Herod family, and these procurators, and governors. At the same time, virtually all other land with which the New Testament is concerned was also under the subjection of Rome.

And this was an oppressive, sad day for Jewish people. They literally despised this Roman oppression. In fact, to be honest with you, they wouldn't even admit it. When Jesus was talking to them in John 8, talking to the Jewish leaders, it was amazing, because he said to them, "you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." And they answered, "We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man." Pretty stupid statement. They wouldn't even admit it that they were slaves to Rome. "We've never been in bondage to anybody," they said. They wouldn't even acknowledge it. They were proud. They despised the Roman yoke.

The whole story of Jesus then, you see, falls within the framework of a nation in bondage to Rome. The shadow of Caesar literally dulls all of the light that scatters itself over the New Testament. You see Caesar on every page. And at the same time - now watch this - there was a movement in the hearts of the Jews to believe that the Messiah was coming. There were some people who wouldn't experience death until he came. Remember Simeon and Anna? There was the feeling that there was something about to happen. The Messiah was about to come. The kingdom of God would be established and the Old Testament was clear on this and there was this feeling that it was going to happen. And then this individual called Jesus Christ arrived on the scene and he opened his mouth in Mark chapter 1 and look what Mark tells us he said.

Mark 1:14. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying - " watch " - the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel of the good news." And man, they got excited. They had known this Roman domination and this Roman oppression. And now all of a sudden here came a wonder worker, a miracle worker, a man who spoke like never another man spoke, a man who did things like never another man did. Maybe this is the Messiah. And when he had fed the multitude on the side of the hill, they were ready to believe it and they wanted to grab him and make him a king and begin a political military revolution that would throw off the yoke of Rome.

They were excited about it. They were looking for a Messiah to overthrow Rome. They were looking for a great general who could set up a Jewish revolution that would bring about independence by military action. Now watch this. Primarily the military overthrow, the military concept of Messiah belonged to a group of Jews called the Zealots. There were four basic parties in Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes. The Essenes were the mystics who lived out in Qumran where we found the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were the ones who copied those.

The Zealots were the political activists who weren't too concerned about religion. They were really concerned about politics. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives and the Sadducees were the religious liberals. But the Zealots really wanted the Messiah to come and they believed that he would be a great General who would come and build a military power that would overthrow Rome. So theirs was a military kingdom.

On the other hand, the Pharisees were equally anxious to overthrow Rome, only they weren't looking for a military kingdom, they were looking for a holy commonwealth. They were looking for a restoration of the Old Testament theocracy. They were looking for Messiah to rule in religious fashion. And so you might look at it this way, the Zealots looked for a military Messiah and the Pharisees looked for a miraculous Messiah.

The Zealots probably believed that the Messiah would make a military action and the Pharisees probably believed that the Messiah would do something miraculous and just throw Rome off by a great supernatural divine miracle. While both were waiting for catastrophic intervention of God and the coming of the Messiah, they knew what Daniel said in 7:13-14. They knew the Messiah would come in clouds and great glory and they didn't know how it would happen, but they each had their own ideas.

And even the apostles, the twelve apostles, expected it. In Acts 1:6, they said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" "When are you going to do it? When are we going to see either the military or the miraculous?" But this was not Jesus' purpose. And that's why in John Chapter 18, when Jesus was talking to Pilate and Pilate was trying to figure out what kind of a king it

is that doesn't have a kingdom, what kind of a king it is that doesn't have a throne, what kind of a king it is that doesn't have a crown. And so he was talking to Jesus about whether he was a king or not. And he said to Him, "Are you a king?" And he said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

"You don't understand what kind of king I am. It isn't my approach to function militarily. And I'm not even about to pull off a miraculous coup and overthrow Rome. That's not my purpose." He said, if he wanted to, he could have called legions of angels, legions of them, thousands of them. And by the way, if one angel can slay 185,000 Assyrians in one shot, a legion of angels could handle anybody.

So, you see, the hope of the political religious restoration was nothing but a pipe dream. Israel lay in the grip of the grim power of Rome and Caesar wouldn't allow them any independence. And yet, in their hearts this hope burned, and it burned, and it burned, that a Messiah would come. Frankly, people, the hope burned so strong in their hearts that it produced a pile of false Messiahs like rash on a body. They were everywhere. False Messiahs by the boatload.

The Zealots, in anticipation of what needed to be done would just say, "Well, we can't wait for the Messiah." And along with the Sicarii who were the assassins in their ranks, they would strike at Rome. They would assassinate some important person or they would pull off some revolutionary act, and all that did was bring about Roman reprisals. And finally in 70 AD, the Romans got so sick of the reactions of the Zealots, they got so sick of this kind of stuff, that they sent Titus Vespasian in 70 AD and the Roman army, and they came down and they literally destroyed Jerusalem. They smashed the city, they crushed the people. They killed 1,100,000 people.

But that wasn't the worst. Between the year 132 and 135 AD, it's about 60 years later, a man named Hadrian came from Rome and he went throughout the entire land of Israel and slaughtered all the people and destroyed all the cities and he literally wiped out the nation of Israel in terms of national existence. Now, I say all of this to give you a picture of what they wanted. They wanted somebody to overthrow Rome. The Zealots believed it could be done militarily, and the Pharisees and the other religionists thought it could be done miraculously by the Messiah, but they were wrong.

You see, they were wrong. Jesus didn't come with that in mind. Before there could ever be Jewish independence, there had to be Jewish salvation, and that had to come first, and they were about to bend at that point. So God's plan was not what they thought. And when Jesus started talking the way he did in the Sermon on the Mount, you can imagine their reaction. They expected Messiah to come in on a white charger. They expected Messiah to come riding in with one slap of his sword and all of a sudden wipe out the enemy. And here he comes and he says, "Happy are the poor in spirit. Happy are the mourners. Happy are the meek." And they're saying to themselves, "What kind of a Messiah is this? What kind of crowd is he going to collect? Who wants a bunch of sob sisters? A bunch of meek people? They'll never handle Rome."

And so he disappointed the political activists, because he wouldn't pull off a revolution. And he disappointed the religionists, because he only healed people. He didn't destroy Rome with cataclysmic miracles. He didn't do it. And that's why, you see, when they finally saw Jesus captured by the Romans, when they finally saw Jesus up there, and they looked at him standing next to Barabbas, and they saw this pathetic person whom Pilate had battered, and beaten, and bruised, and scourged, and smashed a crown of thorns on his head, and there was no beauty in him that man should desire him, and there was nothing about him that was attractive - Read Isaiah 53. "There was no form or comeliness that we should desire Him." - and they took one look at that and they said, "Forget it. That's not the Messiah we want."

And so they screamed, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him. We'll take Barabbas. We'll take Barabbas. He's closer to a Messiah type than this guy." And they hated Him for it. You know, they hated Him because he disappointed them. They hated Him because he didn't fulfill their expectations. And once he died, they were done with him, and that was really the final straw. When the rest of the people came around and said, "Well, he was the Messiah," they said, "Look, he died on a cross. The Old Testament says, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.' Don't tell us our Messiah was crucified a curse. Don't tell us the Messiah came and went and didn't overthrow Rome. Don't tell us the Messiah came and went and didn't change our circumstance in the world. That's no Messiah." And they wouldn't even believe his resurrection, though it was true. And though 500 people saw it, they wouldn't believe it.

When the apostles stood up to preach, you see they had to preach always on the resurrection and they had to say always, "You see, Messiah had to suffer. He had to suffer. He had to die. This is what the Old Testament taught. It had to be this way." Jesus on the road to Emmaus said, "If you'd have known the scriptures, you'd have known this had to happen this way." But they were disappointed really wretchedly disappointed with Jesus.

And it all started right here, because the first time they heard him speak, he said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." What kind of a deal is that? The spoils belong to the strong, not the meek. That countered their whole philosophy of life. But he came as a servant. You see, they were ignorant of Isaiah 40 through 66, that whole section of Isaiah 40 to 66 presents the Messiah as a suffering servant. They didn't even know their Old Testament. A whole huge section. In fact, when he announced who he really was, he quoted from Isaiah 61. And, you know, he identified with a pretty crummy bunch.

He says - Luke 4:18 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor - " oh, brother, " - To heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind, and to set a liberty them that are bruised." Now that's a pretty sad bunch: The blind, and the bruised, and the poor, and the maimed. And what in the world kind of bunch is

that?

The apostle Paul said it in 1 Corinthians, "Not many noble, not many wise, not many mighty." He's chosen the foolish of the world. He was a servant. He didn't come to overthrow Rome. He came to wash the feet of unloving disciples. His whole life was an illustration of humility and service. He said, "The Son of Man has come not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give his life a ransom for many." They missed the whole point. They didn't even know what he came for. Humility, self denial.

Now this set the stage for what he said in this sermon. And what he said here is this - now watch. He said, "It isn't the self sufficient. It isn't the self righteous. It isn't the proud, and the strong, and the arrogant, and the confident, and the satisfied. It isn't the religious who enter my kingdom. It is the broken, and the mourning, and the meek, and the hungry, and the thirsty, and the merciful, and the pure, and the peacemakers, and the persecuted, and the reviled, and the slandered who never retaliate. They're the citizens of my kingdom." And man, he shot them right off their pins.

They couldn't believe it. This couldn't be the Messiah. "The real kingdom citizens," he said, "are these kind." What a revolutionary message. We forget that. Boy do we forget that. We think God needs superstars. We think God needs the high and the mighty. It's never been that way. Never. The rich and the famous, it's never been that way. Our Lord came and just hit them right where they were hurting. He said, "Look, you want to be in my kingdom? The ones in my kingdom are the spiritually bankrupted - " verse 3, " - the mournful, - " verse 4, " - the meek," verse 5.

Now let's talk about it. Meek. It's different from broken in spirit. Let me show you how. The root word is the same idea - different word, same idea. But let me show you. In fact, some places in the Bible these two words could be used interchangeably, but there's a beautiful distinction made here. Now watch. "Broken in spirit" centers on my sinfulness, okay? Verse 3, "Broken in spirit" centers on my sinfulness. "Meekness" centers on God's holiness. Two sides of the same thing. Broken in spirit because I'm a sinner and meek because God is so holy by comparison. Two sides of the same thing.

Look at it another way. Broken in spirit is negative and it results in mourning. Meekness is positive and it results in seeking righteousness. See? It's just the other side of this thing. That's the beauty of the sequence. There's a progression here. First of all, there is this brokenness, this tremendous sense of sinfulness and it's negative and it results in mourning. And then, all of a sudden, you begin to see the other side of it. You begin to see a holy God, and that's meekness. And then you begin to hunger after his holiness. You see the sequence, the flow?

"Happiness," Jesus says, "Happiness, blessedness. Oh, that's for people like this, people who are – watch - realistic about their sin, who are repentant about their sin, who are responsive to God." And the unblessed and the unhappy and those shut out of the kingdom are the arrogant, self-sufficient, self-righteous, unrepentant, stiff-necked, proud people. Man this was devastating. Ooh.

You see, the Zealots were saying, "We want a military Messiah. We want a military kingdom." The Pharisees were saying, "We want a miraculous Messiah. We want a miraculous kingdom." By the way, the Sadducees were saying, "We want a materialistic one." They were the materialists. I suppose the Essenes were over in the corner saying, "We want a monastic one." But Jesus said, "I'll give you a meek one." The kingdom is not going to be materialism. It's not going to be monasticism. It's not going to be militarism, and it's not going to be just flashy miracles. It's going to be for the meek.

And, you know, our world will still have trouble with that. Our world is, associates happiness and success with strength, and confidence, and self assurance, and survival of the fittest, and conquest, and power. That wasn't Jesus' way. His kingdom is for people who are meek.

In Ephesians 4 - remember what we studied there? Going to parallel a lot of that tonight. Ephesians 4:1. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you're called." How do I walk, Paul? "With all lowliness and meekness." That's it. God's kingdom is for the meek. Titus 3:2. "Don't speak evil of anyone. Don't be a brawler. Be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." Pretty simple. Be meek to everybody. Colossians 3:12. "Put on, therefore, as the elective God, holy and beloved tender mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness."

You see, over and over again in the Bible it says that the people in God's kingdom were meek. And by the way, people, that is nothing new. God's standard has always been the same. You go all the way back to the Old Testament. It's the same thing, you see meekness back there as God's standard.

I think it's Psalm 22:26, listen. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied. They shall praise the Lord that seek Him. Your heart shall live forever." Everlasting life, you see, belongs to the meek. To the meek, not the proud. Psalm 25:9. "The meek will he guide in justice." Watch this. "And the meek will he teach his way." God identifies with the meek, and way at the end of Psalms, Psalm 147:6, "The Lord lifts up the meek."

See, God has always identified with that. It's a priority with Him. These are his kind of people. Isaiah 29:19. "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord." See, salvation, and teaching, and blessing, and joy for the meek.

All right, I've emphasized to you that Jesus came and preached that his kingdom was to be occupied by people characterized by meekness. Now, I want to ask five questions tonight and see if they're answered sufficiently to help us understand what this means. Question number one: What does meekness mean? What does it mean to be meek? What is meekness? And we've got to answer that. If the only happy people are meek people, and we'd like to be happy, we'd better know what meekness is. What is it?

Well, notice in verse 5 that it follows to other things, poor in spirit, and mourning. So whatever meekness is, it follows those two things. Meekness comes out of those hearts that are broken in spirit and mourning. The dictionary has an interesting thing. I looked up "meekness" in the dictionary and it says "deficient in courage." Blessed are the cowardly? That's wrong. That's not the Bible definition of meekness. Meekness is not that.

Look further. "The meek" comes from a Greek word. The root is *praus*. And it means basically, here's the root, "mild, gentle, and soft." Mild, gentle, and soft. So the idea is a person who is gentle, mild, tenderhearted. Somebody who's patient. Somebody who's just submissive, and so forth. Now that's the root concept: Mild, gentle, soft, patient, kind, quiet, willing, submissive.

Let me illustrate it from some of its uses. It was often used as a word to describe a soothing medicine. Other times it was used to describe a gentle breeze. And other times, it was used to describe a colt that had been broken and domesticated and could be used for good purposes. So, it was soothing, or something that was gentle, or something that was very comforting. Further, it is said that it was characteristic of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 10:1, it talks about the meekness of Christ. The meekness of Christ. In Matthew 21:5, it talks about the meekness of Christ. It says, "Behold the king cometh unto thee meek, sitting upon an ass and a colt, the foal of an of an ass."

When Jesus came into the city, you see, he didn't come on a white charger conquering and to conquer. He came riding in on the colt, the foal of a jackass. I mean, that was really low-class transportation. He was meek. Further, let me say something to you about it. It is a gentleness, and a mildness, and a subdued character - watch this - it is not weakness. It is power under control. Get that definition. We shared that with you in our study of Ephesians. It is power under control. Okay? Power under control.

It is a byproduct of self emptying, of self humiliation. It is a brokenness before God. It is the taming of the lion. Remember when I told you that? Not the killing of the lion. It's power under control. It's Ephesians 4:26. It's okay to be angry, but don't sin. In other words, let it be a righteous anger, a controlled anger for God's purposes. Don't be angry because you've been offended, be angry because God has, see? It's anger for the right reason at the right time.

Meekness doesn't mean impotence. It is power under control. And if you examine Proverbs 25:28 it says, "He that hath no rule over his spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." That's power out of control. You've got power, but there's nothing to contain it, and it's like a destroyed city. On the other hand, Proverbs 16:32 says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." In other words, to rule the spirit is meekness. To be out of control is the lack of meekness. It is power under control.

Let's take it from the standpoint of the Greeks' use of it. I told you they use it to speak of a soothing medicine. Medicine under control is helpful. Out of control, it kills. They use it to speak about an animal that was broken and useful. An unbroken colt, an unbroken horse destroys. A broken horse is useful. They used it to speak of a gentle breeze. A gentle breeze cools and soothes. A hurricane kills, out of control. Power under control is meekness.

One writer put it beautifully. This is what he said, "Meekness is the fruit of the spirit." And it is listed in Galatians 5. "Meekness is a fruit of the spirit, which is found on the soil of spiritual poverty, contrition, and mourning. It is a noble flower which grows out of the ashes of self love, on the grave of pride. On the one hand, the man sees his own utter ruin, his unworthiness and misery. On the other, he contemplates the kindness and the benignity of God and Christ Jesus. The internal characteristic is a disposition of heart, which through the keen perception of its own misery and the abounding mercy of God, has become so pliant, gentle, mild, flexible, and tractable, that no traces of its original ruggedness, of its wild and untamed nature even remain."

It's the opposite of violence and the opposite of vengeance. The meek man has learned like Hebrews 10:34, "he has learned to take joyfully the plundering of his possessions knowing that he has a better possession, even an abiding one with God." The meek person has died to self. Now it's going to crystallize for you in a minute. The meek person has died to self. He never worries about his own injuries. He bears no grudges. You remember what I told you John Bunyan said? "He who is already down cannot fall." There's nothing to lose. A meek person never defends himself because he knows he doesn't deserve anything. He never gets angry about what's done to him, because he doesn't deserve anything.

Meekness. This is what Christ said characterizes people in his kingdom. They're not defending themselves. They're not running around trying to get their due. They know they have nothing. They're already broken in spirit over the sin. They're already mourning and weeping over the consequence of it. And in humility they stand before a holy God and they have nothing to commend themselves.

Power under control. They trust in God. They delight in him. And God promises to give them the earth. It isn't cowardice. It isn't flabbiness. It isn't a wishy-washy lack of conviction. It isn't just human niceness. Meekness says, "In myself, nothing is possible. But in God, everything is possible." Meekness says, "For me, I offer no defense. For God, I'll give my life. For God I'll die." It's not a passive acceptance of sin, but it's an anger under control. It's holy indignation.

Illustration. "For even hereunto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps." Now here's real meekness. He did no sin. Neither was guile found in his mouth. Now start right there. He never did anything wrong. So, whatever anybody accused him of was false accusation. So whatever anybody punished him for was wrong. Whenever

they abused him, they were out of line. Whenever they slandered him, they were wrong. Whenever they mocked him, it was a lie, because he never did anything wrong. He never sinned. He never deceived. He never did anything wrong.

And even though he never deserved any criticism, when it came - in verse 23 - and when he was reviled, he didn't revile again. And when he suffered, he didn't threaten. He just committed Himself to him that judges righteously.

Stop right there. That's meekness. Jesus never defended himself, never. But when they desecrated his Father's temple, he made a whip and started beating them, didn't he? Meekness says, "I'll never defend myself, but I'll die defending God." That's meekness. "I'll never defend myself. I'll die defending God."

Twice Jesus cleansed the temple. He blasted the hypocrites. He condemned the false leaders of Israel. He fearlessly uttered divine judgment upon people, and yet the Bible says he was meek. Meekness is not impotence. Meekness is power used only in the defense of God, never in the defense of myself.

He never used it for himself. He could have called legions of angels, but he didn't because he never did anything to defend himself. He could have had 12 legions of angels. What does it mean to be meek? What does this concept mean? It means power under control. You look at yourself and you're broken in spirit because you see your sin. And you mourn over your sin and you know you deserve nothing, so there's nothing to defend. But you see the holiness of God, and as you see the holiness of God, you'll die defending his holy name. You see?

Oh man, this is a shock to those Jews. Those Jews spent all their time defending their own holiness and they were hypocrites. They never entered his kingdom, because they didn't know the meaning of meekness. Their power was out of control. They were blasting away and lashing away at anybody who offended them. That's not meekness.

Second question: How does meekness manifest itself? We can get a better handle on it if we can see it in action, so let me give you some illustrations. Some of them we shared with you in the Ephesians series, and I'm just going to go by them again. Now listen. How does meekness function? So you've got to get an idea where you are.

First of all, let me have you look at Genesis 13 - all the way back to Genesis. Fabulous, fabulous story. This is Abraham. I love this story. Abraham was living in Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a secular city and God said to Abraham, "Abraham, you're my man. Abraham, get up, get out of this city, go to a land that I'm going to show you."

And in Chapter 12, God gave Abraham this fabulous covenant. God said, "I'm going to give you a covenant you won't believe. You're going to have seed like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. Abraham, I'm going to give you a land. Abraham, I'm going to give you a covenant that is like no covenant ever given. You're my man, Abraham. Out of your loins is going to come a nation." The fabulous Abrahamic covenant. Abraham was God's choice man.

Abraham had a nephew with him. His nephew's name was Lot. Look at verse 7. And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abrams cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. Stop right there. There was a big argument about who gets what pasture. See? And, you know, normally, you know, if we were thinking of it, we'd say that Abraham would say, "Look, Buster, who got the covenant, you or me?" "Well, you did, Uncle Abraham." "And don't you ever forget it, sonny. I got the covenant." You see, he could have pulled rank couldn't he? Easily. Abraham had the right. He was God's man. Abraham had the choice. He'd been given the covenant. Lot was nothing but a hitchhiking relative. You say, "How did Abraham deal with it?"

Look at verse 8. "Abraham said unto him, 'Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we're brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If you want to take the left hand, then I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left.' "

Wow. He says, "Lot, I don't want to have this kind of stuff. You take whatever portion you want. I'll just take what's left." Abraham, you're nuts. You're going to give up the best land. It's meekness. Did Abraham have the power to take the land he wanted? Abraham had the power to do away with Lot. He had power, but he never used his power in defense of himself. It is beautiful submission to God.

And he knew in his heart that God was in control, and if Lot took the left side, God would work that out. If Lot took the right side, God would do that too. Meekness. He had the right and the power, but he never used it for his own benefit. Beloved, we've got to learn that lesson. That's meekness. After all, when you see that you're nothing more than a sinner, you'll learn the meaning of Romans 12:10, "in honor preferring one another." Just like Abraham did.

Then there was Joseph. Joseph, you know, they sold Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery, remember? And he was taken down there to Egypt. They thought, "Boy, we got rid of that kid." Father's favorite. They couldn't stand the kid. Favorite kid. Father doted on him, so they just did him away. And then a little later there was a famine, and they were desperate, and they had to go to Egypt to get grain. And guess who was the big shot in Egypt? Joseph. He had risen to the ranks of Egypt so that he was the Prime Minister of Egypt next to the Pharaoh.

And here are his brothers begging him for grain. He could have said, "Let me tell you guys a story before I say no." But he didn't do that. He had the power, but it was under control. You know what he did? There wasn't a vengeful bone in his body. There wasn't any antagonism and bitterness in any grudge. He looked at them and he loved them. And he gave them everything they needed. In fact, he noticed that Benjamin wasn't there and he longed to see Benjamin. Meekness. Joseph was no coward. Joseph was a mighty man, but meekness, people, is not cowardice. It's power under control. I will never do something to defend myself. I'll do anything to defend God.

Then there's David. In 1 Samuel chapter 24, David found Saul, remember, and Saul was chasing him. Saul was trying to kill him. Saul used to throw spears at him. Saul was after David. Saul knew that David was going to be the next king and God had anointed him, and Saul hated him and despised him. And what made it worse was that Saul's own son Jonathan deeply loved David.

Saul chased David all over the place and old Jonathan used to shoot arrows to tell him when his father was coming. And finally David, all of a sudden, finds Saul laying down sound asleep. Now's David's opportunity. Just take a knife, whoosh, plunge it in and it's over. With one stroke of the blade, he could have ended the revolution that was going on between he and Saul. He could have taken his throne. And you know what David's men said to him? "Do it, David, do it, get him. I mean, he's here man. This is your time. Woo hoo. See? Do it. Don't mess around, David. You let him go, you're going to get it."

So you know what David did? He got his knife, and he went over there, and he raised his knife, and he cut off a corner of his robe, and took it, just so Saul would know he was there but didn't kill him. You see, David wouldn't use his power. He had it. He had the right. He was the anointed king. He had the ability. He had the knife and Saul was asleep. But he didn't do it. He would never act on behalf of himself, but he would act on behalf of God.

In 2 Samuel 16, David and his son Absalom are in conflict. And Absalom is going to pull a revolution, a coup, and he chases David out of the city and David's outside in the wilderness, and one of Saul's men comes along and Saul - one of Saul's former guys named Shimei and he starts cursing David. "David, look at you, David. Ha ha, you're out here and your son's knocked you off, David. Hot shot, aren't you? Big stuff, big king of Israel, David, out here hiding in the bush."

And Abishai, David's nephew, said to David, "David, let me go over there and I'll cut his head off. Who does he think he is cursing the king?" 1 Samuel 16:9, he says, "Let me go and take his head off." David looked at Abishai and said, "No, let him alone, let him alone." David wouldn't act in his own defense. He had a beautiful, subservient, trusting attitude with total submission to God's will.

You see, God can do anything in world if he gets people that are subject to Him. But he can't function with people who do their own thing. His kingdom has to be occupied with people who are submissive.

That's what he's saying. The Jews, they weren't ready for them. Think of Moses.

Numbers 12:3. Listen to this statement. "The man Moses - " get this line " - the man Moses was very meek above all the men who were on the face of the earth." Numbers 12:3 says Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. You say meek? He was meek? Woo, but he was a pretty strong man. I mean, he went in there and when that Egyptian was doing in an Israelite and he killed that Egyptian and buried him in the ground. I mean, he was a strong guy.

And then he went in there and he said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, Pharaoh." Pharaoh started getting his magicians out. They're pulling a few stunts and Moses kept up with him and pulled off better stunts. He said, "I'll say it again, Pharaoh. Let my people go." Doesn't sound too meek to me. Came down out of the Mount Sinai, saw Aaron, his brother, leading the people in the worship of the golden calf and big orgy, and he was so furious, he smashed the tables of stone and he decided he ought to wipe them all out. Doesn't sound too meek to me.

Yeah, but you see, if you think that, you don't know what meekness is. You see him in Exodus 32:19-20 and, boy, he's furious. Moses is hopping mad. 32:19. "It came to pass as he came near the camp he saw the calf and the dancing and Moses' anger burned. And he cast the tables out of his hands and he broke them beneath mount, and he took the calf which they had made, and he burned it in the fire. And he ground it to powder, and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it." Man he was mad. "What are you so mad about, Moses?" "I'm mad about what you did to God. I'm mad that you violated what God just told me when I was up there. 'Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt make no graven image.' " He wasn't defending himself, he was defending God.

In fact, when God said to Moses in Exodus 3, "Moses you're my man," he says, "You don't want me God, I'm useless. I'm inadequate. I have a speech impediment. I can't talk. You've got to be kidding. You want me to go lead a whole children of Israel out of Egypt, just me alone? Listen, I killed one Egyptian and it's cost me 40 years in the wilderness. Well, how am I going to get two million Jews out of that country without a lot of trouble? I can't do it. I'm inadequate." You see, he had no confidence in himself. He couldn't defend himself before God, but he would defend God before anybody. That's meekness.

Paul had the same thing. Paul says in Philippians 3:3, "I can't trust the flesh." Philippians 4:13, "But I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Let me show you a contrast. 2 Chronicles chapter 26. 2 Chronicles Chapter 26. This is a fantastic story. King Uzziah, remember Isaiah said "In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." Oh Isaiah, he mourned when King Uzziah died, because it was a kind of a sad ending.

Uzziah really had - boy he was really some kind of general. 2 Chronicles 26:6 says, "He went forth and he warred against the Philistines - " this is Uzziah. He leads the troops against the Philistines.

“And he broke down the wall of Gath - ” now these are Philistine cities, “ - he broke the wall of Jabneh, he broke the wall of Ashdod, he built cities around Ashdod and among the Philistines.” The guy literally devastated the whole nation. He wiped out all their cities and rebuilt his own cities in their country.

In fact, the “Philistines” is the ancient name for Palestine. He literally moved them out. He did them in. And God helped him, verse 7 says, “against the Philistines and against the Arabians who dwelt at Gur Baal and the Meunum. And the Ammonites,” and so forth. He goes on and he was fabulous. He won all these things. He had an incredible army. You got down in verse 12, “the whole number of the heads of the fathers houses of the mighty men of valor, 2,600. Under their hand was an army 307,500.” Three hundred and seven thousand five soldiers in his army, almost a third of a million soldiers. Incredible army.

And they made war with mighty power. And verse 14 says, “They had shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and slings to cast stones - ” these great big war machines. It says in 15 he made in Jerusalem engines, war engines invented by skillful men. He had engineers. He had literally a fantastic military machine. And his name spread far abroad, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong. And all of a sudden, boy, God is doing the victory. But what happened? Verse 16, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.”

Listen, there were only one group of people ever allowed to burn incense on the altar and who was it? The priests. But Uzziah got the idea that he was so great, that he was so invincible, that he was so superior, he was above the priests. And he said, “What do I need with a lowly priest? Look at me. I’ve conquered my world.” And he charged in there and he started doing his own religious thing. And he was so busy exalting himself that he defiled God. And you know what happened? I’ll tell you what happened. It tells us in verse 21, “And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper.”

When a man seeks to be proud, he inevitably will violate God in defending himself. When a man is meek, he will defend God because he has no need to defend himself. Meekness. Who was the greatest example of all? Jesus Christ. Back to Matthew 5:5. Third question, and we’ll hurry to a conclusion. What is the result? What is the result of meekness?

Well, first of all, it says “blessed are the meek.” You want to be happy” That’s what it means. And I don’t mean happiness in the sense of the flippant world circumstantial kind of happiness. I mean blessedness. happiness in God’s terminology, an abiding true joy. And what he’s saying are “happy are the meek.” Happy.

Second thing that results - this is great: They shall inherit the earth. And, you know, you can talk all over the place. I mean, we can spend hours just talking about what that phrase means: They shall inherit the earth. See, originally, God had promised to Israel the land. But even further than that, God had promised to man the earth, right? Didn't he give them dominion over the earth? The fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and the animals? You see, God gave man dominion over the whole earth. And what he's saying is that when you become a believer and you are meek, you enter the kingdom, you come into that original inheritance. It's paradise regained. And, beloved, ultimately will we not gain the earth? Ultimately will we not reign on the whole earth with Lord Jesus Christ in the great coming kingdom? Yes.

And what he's saying here is this. The people in the kingdom shall inherit the earth and the only ones who enter my kingdom are the meek, not the proud. The ones that are broken over their sin, not the ones who think they have no sin. The ones who are mourning over the fact that they're lost, not the ones who are laughing about the fact that they're supposedly all right.

You see, back in Isaiah, way back before that in Genesis, God promised them the land. And they never really got it all. They never got the earth. There was always a partial possession. Even today it's a partial possession. They don't have all the land. Why, do you realize that the original promise of the land to Abraham extends all the way to the Euphrates River? They're nowhere near that. They can hardly get across the Jordan to the east bank. They don't have that. There's a sense in which that is an unfulfilled promise.

Isaiah chapter 57 and Isaiah chapter 60 says that there's going to come a day when the Messiah comes and he's going to give them all that land and the whole earth, too. But you know what those Jews thought? Boy, the millennial kingdom belongs to the strong, the proud, the defiant, those who won't take this oppression. Jesus said, "No. No. You see, the earth will belong to the meek." And you say, "How are the meek ever going to get the earth? How are they going to pull it off?" Well, see the point is, the meek just go into Christ's kingdom and he does it.

I want to add this. The emphatic pronoun is here again as it is in the others, and this most helpful. It says in the Greek, "Blessed are they, - " "Blessed are the meek - " now watch this " - for they only shall inherit the earth." Proud people aren't going to do it. You see what - remember what Jesus said? "Except a man become as a little - " what? " - child, you can't enter the kingdom." Unless you humble yourself and become as a little child, you can't enter the kingdom. Proud people don't come to the kingdom.

If you've got pride, it's a good possibility you're not in the kingdom, if that dominates your life. The word "inherit," beautiful word, *kronome*. It means to "receive an allotted portion." God promised it. God laid it out. In Psalm 37, by the way, this Beatitude is almost a direct quote of Psalm 37:11. And in Psalm 37, you see there was a very definite promise of the land, and the righteous among the Jews

were saying, "Well, why do all the evil people prosper? And why do all these other people prosper? And why are we getting the dirty end of everything?" And you remember how the Psalmist said it? "Don't you worry about that. You just commit your way unto the Lord. Trust also in him. Delight in him, and he'll give you the desires of your heart. Rest in him." Remember that great passage, Psalm 37? You just keep your perspective toward the Lord. Don't you worry about what's going on around you. Don't you worry about how the wicked apparently prosper. You just trust, and commit, and delight, and rest in the Lord, and the day is going to come when the Lord is going to give you the kingdom. You just hang in there.

"And the day is going to come," Psalm 37 says, when God is going to come in judgment against the evil. So don't you try to determine those things on your own. "The Lord shall laugh," it says in Psalm 37:13, "for he sees his day coming." And it may look like it's reversed now, but he says, "Those people, those evildoers, will be cut down like the grass, and they'll wither like the green herb, but you just trust in the Lord, and delight in the Lord, and commit your way unto the Lord, and rest in the Lord." And then I love this. "For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth."

Don't worry. This world may belong to the wicked and the evil today, but someday it'll belong to us. Someday it'll belong to us. You say, "John, is this just future?" Well, in a sense, it's a future. It's a future tense verb. I think to Israel, when this was originally given in Psalm 37, he was talking about a future earth. And I think to us who are Christians, we get in on the kingdom, don't we? We're going to be there. Oh yeah. We're going to be part of that kingdom. We're going to reign with Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 3:21, it says "Therefore let no man glory in men for all things are yours." I love this. "Whether Paul, Apollos, or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." It's all yours. The kingdom is yours. The future and present. Over in Chapter 6 he says, "You are going to judge the world." In the kingdom, you are literally going to judge the world. You're going to judge angels.

There's coming a day when the Christian will partake with Israel in the kingdom, and that is future. But there's a present tense right here. All things are ours right now. You know, it's kind of like the kingdom is already ours, it's just in escrow. We haven't really possessed it yet, but it's ours. And I'm just waiting for the day when it fully becomes mine. Psalm 149 says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people. He will beautify the meek with salvation." What does that mean? One day he'll execute vengeance on the nations. He'll bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters. What does he mean? One of these days he's going to gather up the wicked and take it all away from them and give it to us. The new heaven and the new earth. But can I add a footnote?

The meek inherit the earth is a future, but I think it has a present. I don't know about you, but the fact that I know one day I'll possess the earth gives me a sense of possession right now. Is that true? You

remember the wonderful hymn, "Heaven above the softer blue, earth around is sweeter green. Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen. Birds with gladder songs or flow, flowers with deeper beauty shine, since I know as now I know I am his and - " what, " - he is mine." The world as I know it now, the world as I see it now comes alive with meaning because it's mine in escrow. It's waiting for the kingdom.

George McDonald wrote some beautiful thoughts. This is what he said. "We cannot see the world as God means it in the future. Safe as our souls are characterized by meekness. In meekness only are we its inheritors. Meekness alone makes the spiritual retina pure to receive God's things as they are, mingling with them neither imperfection nor impurity." Well, that's beautiful. You see, it's that fact that we're in his kingdom that helps us see it different. We could never see it any other way than the way the world sees it apart from Christ. So the earth is ours, now and forever.

Finally, you say, "John why is this necessary? Why is meekness necessary?" I've got to tell you this. It is necessary because only the meek can be saved. That's first. Only meek can be saved. Psalm 149:4. "The meek will he beautify with salvation." No meekness, no salvation. Listen to me, people, if you don't come to God with a broken spirit, mourning over your sin and humility before his holiness, you can't be saved. That's why it's important.

Further, it's commanded. God says, "Seek meekness." Seek meekness. You want to know something further? You know why a Christian needs to be meek? You can't even receive God's word unless you're meek. James 1:21 says, "Receive the engrafted word with - " what? " - meekness." If you're not meek, if you don't have a humble spirit, you don't even listen to God's word. You can't even receive it.

You see, we need meekness because you can't be saved without it because it's commanded by God, because you can't receive God's word without it. I'll tell you another reason. You need meekness because you can't witness without it. You say, "What do you mean?" You can't witness effectively from a stance of pride. That's why Peter says, "Give to every man an answer of the reason of the hope that is within you with meekness." 1 Peter 3:15. I'll tell you another thing, you not only should be meek because it's commanded by God, it's necessary for salvation. It's necessary to receive God's word and it's necessary to give it to other people. But people, you need to be meek because meekness alone gives God the glory.

Peter writing in 1 Peter 3:4 says, "If you want to glorify God, don't care of your outside, but adorn your inside with meekness, or adorn your inside with meekness." What does it mean? Power under control. How is it manifest? In all of the vicissitudes of life, you never seek to defend yourself, but only God. What are its results? Blessedness and the inheritance of the kingdom. Why is necessary? It's the only way to be saved. It's commanded by God. It's necessary for receiving his word. It's necessary for giving his word. And it's the very reason for existence, to glorify God.

Finally, you say, “John, how do I know if I’m meek? I want to be meek. Is there a way I can examine my heart?” Let me close with this. Listen now. I’m going to ask you these questions. You want to know if you’re meek? Answer these questions. Number one. Do I experience self control? Do I only get angry? Do I only react? Do I only retaliate when God is dishonored?

Second. Do I always respond humbly and obediently to the word? Because if I’m meek, I will. I will receive the word with meekness. Ask yourself. Do I experience self control? Am I only angry when God is dishonored? Secondly. Do I respond humbly and obediently to the word? Thirdly. Do I always make peace? Do I always make peace? Am I a peacemaker? Because, you see, that’s meekness. Meekness forgives and restores and makes peace. That’s why Ephesians 4 says that we are to “be characterized with all lowliness and meekness, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” Only meek people make unity. Only meek people make peace. Or am I the kind of a person that stirs it up?

Another one, number four. Do I receive criticism well and love the people who give it? Meekness does. Do I receive criticism well and love the people who give it? 2 Timothy 2:25 says, “In meekness instructing those that oppose.” And I would add this to this one. Do I give instruction with meekness or pride? What do you do? Do you receive criticism with meekness and love those that give it? And do you give criticism in meekness? Ask yourself those questions. See if you know real meekness. I’ll sum it with this word. Meekness means to be finished with me for good. Let’s pray.

Father, we know that if we don’t see ourselves this way, one of two things is possible. First, if I look at my life and I don’t pass the test and I don’t see meekness, there is a possibility that I’m not a Christian at all no matter what may have happened in the past.

Secondly, there’s the possibility that I’m a Christian, but at this time, I’m acting in disobedience. Lord, help everyone here to see this. Where there is no meekness, there may be a soul on the way to hell. Or there may be a believer on the way to chastening. In either case, Lord, we know You don’t want it to be so.

While your heads are bowed, let me just suggest this to you. You say, “John, I want to learn to be meek, what do I do?” Well, let me give you two things. You really want to be meek? Do you really want to experience that in your life? The first thing is this, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor under heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” If you want to be meek, the first thing I suggest you do is to learn of Jesus. Study the gospels, study every day his life, the beauty of his character, learn meekness from Jesus.

Secondly, Galatians 5 says “the fruit of the Spirit is meekness.” Let the Spirit of God control your life. If you’ll learn Christ and you yield to the Spirit, you’ll know meekness. Father, we pray that in each of

our hearts we'll deal with this as the Spirit convicts. In Christ's name. Amen.

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