

GALATIANS - SERMON 35

GALATIANS 5:23 — THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - MEEKNESS - πραότης
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23 August 1998

INTRODUCTION: Read Galatians 5:19-26

Meekness was an attribute despised by the Roman Empire. Politically, those who were not rough, assertive, and powerful were ruled by those who were. To intentionally pursue a disposition and manner of conduct that would put oneself into a position of subjection rather than in control was considered laughable. Nevertheless, as it is with all the ways of God, what seems self-defeating and foolish is actually the way to victory and blessing. God has determined that it is not the rough, assertive, and powerful who shall rule the earth but rather the meek.

Matthew 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

If we would advance the cause of God in the earth today, it is to be done through meekness.

OUTLINE:

- I WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MEEK?
- II WHAT IS THE RESULT OF MEEKNESS?
- III WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO BE MEEK?

I WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MEEK?

The word in the original language means to be mild, to be gentle, and to be soft. It is, therefore, often ascribed to people who are spineless, who lack conviction, and who will compromise anything for the sake of peace at any price.

A meek person is seen as a wimp who caves into pressure. He is a person who avoids conflict at any cost. This is the popular notion of meekness. However, this is far from a biblical concept of meekness.

Meekness is not weakness or timidity. Christ was not weak, He was not timid, and He was not spineless. Yet the Bible refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as a meek man.

Matthew 11:29

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 21:5

"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly (meek), and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

2 Corinthians 10:1

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ -- who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.

Again and again the Lord Jesus Christ is described as a meek person. He is never described as weak or spineless.

What is it to be a meek person?

A meek person is one who possesses
an attitude of humility with reference to himself,
an attitude of patience toward his fellow man, and
an attitude of submission toward God.

A A MEEK PERSON HAS AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY WITH REFERENCE TO HIMSELF

A meek person is one who thinks lowly of himself. He is not proud of himself. He does not glory in himself. This man find nothing in himself of which he can boast. A meek person is little in his own eyes. Because of this he does not demand anything for himself. He does not demand his rights. He does not demand his way. He is not overly sensitive to the way he is treated by other people. He is not defensive of himself because he is aware of his own sinfulness. He knows that as a sinner he deserves nothing and he therefore expects nothing.

As a result, he does not pity himself. He does not feel sorrow for himself. He does not think of himself as someone deserving something better. In fact, he is not occupied with self at all.

The meek person is one who has recognized his own lack of desert for good things and good treatment. He is amazed that God and his fellow man can recognize and treat him as well as they do. A meek person is one who has died to himself. He does not worry about his own injuries. He does not bear grudges. He is not angry over the treatment he receives from others. He does not fret over getting his just due.

A meek person has the same attitude found in Paul.

Ephesians 3:8

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. . .

A meek person is not filled with self-esteem but rather one who is filled with humility.

B A MEEK PERSON HAS AN ATTITUDE OF PATIENCE TOWARD HIS FELLOW MAN

One who is mild, gentle, and soft towards others is one who does not get impatient and angry with them over their short-comings, sins, and immaturities. If others offend, he patiently bears with it knowing that he himself is a sinner. When he deals with the sins of others, he does not do so with harshness, but rather with mildness and gentleness.

He is not severe, rigorous, nor does he have a domineering attitude. In the tongue of the meek person is the law of kindness. He treats others with gentleness and long-suffering.

A meek person, because of his patience, is also forgiving. This kind of person does not possess the spirit of retaliation. He does not seek to even the score. He is happy to wait upon God for vindication.

When conviction is wrought upon the offender and forgiveness is sought, the meek person forgives seven times seventy. Towards others the meek person is gentle, patient, kind, mild, and forgiving.

A meek person is the opposite of one who is violent, harsh, and vindictive. The contrast is laid out for us in the Word of God.

Titus 3:2

. . . to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility (meekness) to all men.

Abraham is a classic example of meekness. Abraham was the patriarch of the people of God. He was the one possessing authority, and yet he was meek.

Genesis 13:1-11

Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD. Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Abraham was not a fighter over his rights and dues. He did not demand his way, or his rights or his prerogatives. He would not fight with Lot or demand his superiority. He pursued peace with Lot.

Meekness is not only an attitude of humility towards oneself, but it is also an attitude of patience towards our fellow man.

C A MEEK PERSON HAS AN ATTITUDE OF SUBMISSION TOWARD GOD

The meek are those who do not quarrel with God. Whatever God wills they will. God's decisions, doctrines, will, and providences are accepted with a receptive and willing heart. When they come to God's Word they do not come to argue, but to learn, to listen, and to obey. When they experience God's providences, they do not complain or murmur, but they are thankful for the lessons God teaches them through their hardships. They are content to do what God tells them to do. They are content with what God provides them.

They do not chaff against God but accept what they have from God as being the proper proportion allotted unto them.

A meek person does not demand that his will be carried out, but rather yields his will to God's. He accepts all of God's dealings with him as good. Therefore, he does not dispute, argue, quarrel, or resist the dealings of God with him. He does not fight or contend against God. The meek person has no argument with God.

Psalm 131:1-3

A Song of Ascents. Of David. LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. 2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.

David reflects the heart of a meek person with respect to submission to God in this psalm.

When God takes something away from His people (*weaned*) they do not contend or complain against Him for so doing. Verse 3 expresses the peaceful attitude of the meek man with respect to the will of God for him.

The essence of a meek person is that he is humble toward himself, patient with others, and submissive to God. He is not proud, arrogant, or demanding. He is not cruel, harsh, or vindictive. Instead he is gentle, mild, undemanding, and willing to yield to others without compromising true principles. Though he will earnestly contend for the faith he does not fight with others over lesser matters. He believes what God teaches and obeys what God commands.

This attitude is completely foreign to the world. It is the opposite of what the world esteems. The Jews were not looking for a meek Messiah, but a powerful, vindictive, and conquering one. They wanted a ruler and not a disciple willing to wash the feet of His followers.

Meekness was and is held in contempt by the world. The kingdom of Christ is composed of the meek and not the proud (Matthew 5:5).

David was an example of this in his several opportunities to kill Saul, but he preferred to wait the Lord's hand in this matter. Moses was also an example of meekness.

Numbers 12:3

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

Moses did not use his power and authority to strike back at those who contended with him. He awaited the Lord's hand in dealing with such.

- II WHAT IS THE RESULT OF MEEKNESS?
What happens to meek people?

Matthew 5:5

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

The world would tell us that we shall miss out on and lose many good things if we are meek. But notice the blessings that the Bible attributes to the meek.

A The meek are those who have everlasting life.

Psalm 22:26

*The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!*

The idea is that the meek shall *live forever*. In the beatitudes meekness is one of the marks of a true Christian. Meekness is an indispensable evidence of true Christianity.

B The meek are those who know the instruction and guidance of God.

Psalm 25:9

The humble (meek) He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.

Meek people better understand and truly understand the ways of God because they come to Him in an attitude of submission. Coming to God in this way, God is pleased to bless them with additional light and understanding as to His ways.

The Bible tells us that Moses was the meekest man on the earth and also that no man knew God as well as Moses knew Him.

C The meek receive the support and strength of God.

Psalm 147:6

The LORD lifts up the humble (meek); He casts the wicked down to the ground.

Contrary to the way of the world, God promotes the humble over the proud. Moses was attacked several times. He never defended himself. He waited for the Lord to defend him (Korah's discipline is a great example).

D The meek know the joy of God.

Isaiah 29:19

The humble (meek) also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

The meek are the ones who are also poor in the spirit. Meek people are extraordinarily happy people. Why? It is because they are not consumed in fighting and arguing with others and with God. Being meek removes much of the conflict that arises from the failure to be humble regarding self, patient towards others, and submissive with respect to God.

E The meek are the special objects of Christ's ministry.

Isaiah 61:1

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me (Jesus Christ), because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor (meek); He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. . .

Christ has a special interest in ministering to the meek.

- F The meek escape God's wrath.

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.

Hope of exemption from the wrath of God to come is found in meekness.

Surely the meek are blessed.

III WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO BE MEEK?

Obviously, if we desire the six blessings listed above, it is necessary to be meek. There are additional reasons as well.

- A It is the meek who are saved.

Psalms 149:4

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble (meek) with salvation.

- B It is the meek who receive with meekness the Word of God.

Mildness, softness, and submission should characterize those who come to the Word of God.

If we would ever grow it must be by coming to the Word of God with a meek ear.

- C Meekness is essential to our witness for Christ.

Christians long to bring others to Christ.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. . .

In our witnessing we must employ meekness. This does not always exclude forcefulness and assertiveness with some. But with those who are asking after the truth, we must answer with meekness. Preaching the gospel should not be stained by argumentativeness.

- D Meekness is essential to church unity.

Ephesians 4:1-3

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness (meekness), with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Meekness promotes unity.

- E Meekness is essential to proper church discipline.

Galatians 6:1-2

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness (meekness), considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

We are not fighting with people when we are trying to restore them.

F Meekness is essential to proper teaching.

2 Timothy 2:24-25

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility (meekness) correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth. . .

When we teach and when we are resisted in our teaching, there is no room to be given to retaliation. Meekness is to characterize us.

G Meekness is essential to Christ-likeness.

Matthew 11:29

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

We are to be like our Savior. He was meek. Therefore we are to be meek. In respect to the three attributes of meekness (toward self, others, and God) the Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect example. So should we be as well.

1 Peter 3:4

. . . rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle (meek) and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Meekness in a woman is called *precious*.

1 Timothy 6:11

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (meekness).

Here is a command to Timothy to work hard and pursue meekness, among other things.

Conclusion:

Meekness is a disposition in direct opposition to pride. If pride is one's besetting sin, then the study of meekness is appropriate and necessary. Meekness is the opposite of pride. To do away with pride requires replacing it with something - meekness.

Use Hymn # 444