

The Strength of Meekness

The Beatitudes

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Well, our text this evening comes from Matthew 5, and I invite you to turn there with me as we return to the Beatitudes, which open the Sermon on the Mount. I'm going to read the first three verses of the Beatitudes, and what we see is that these Beatitudes are not only describing the same person, which we've explained on many occasions, but they also lead into one another; the first Beatitude leads into the second, leads into the third, and so there's a sense in which it's like peeling an onion and you keep getting into more and more to get to the core of everything. I just want to read verses 3 through 5, which will be sufficient for this evening, where we read that Jesus opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are
the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Beloved, what Jesus does in the Beatitudes is he opens the very core of our lives for examination. He shows us the Spirit that is produced by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and the principle of spiritual life that is placed inside of the one that is born again and believes in Christ and becomes a new creation. In Matthew 5:3, we read that, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt and have nothing to commend themselves before God. They're not equal with God. They're not on the same page with God. They are sinful creatures separated from God, and that's the status in which they find themselves apart from Christ. In verse 4, you see something of the emotional reaction to that status of being spiritually bankrupt. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." There's a sorrow over sin, not a flippancy toward it, not a joking spirit about it or anything like that, there's a sorrow and a grief that comes over the one who has been convicted of sin, and his relationship to sin can never be the same again.

I remember just within a matter of a few short days after my conversion, a guy that I had run with in matters of iniquity in the past, I was starting to describe to him that I was seeing things differently. I no longer thought those things were right and he dismissed it and he said, "Ah, Green, come on, it's not all that serious." But to me, it was. It was the first time that I had seen it seriously in all of my life, to see sin seriously as it was, and

that was a mark that something had changed inside me, that there was a sorrow and a resistance against sin that hadn't been there before, and that suddenly made me distinct from the one that used to be a friend to me. And that's the kind of thing that we're talking about. There's a distinction. There is a change that comes into place when you are born again. You are born again to a new life that views righteousness and sin from a different perspective than you ever did before. And so I just ask you, beloved, whether you know something of that in your own life, some kind of change, a perspective on sin that views it not as something that you enjoy, not as something to be lightly regarded, but something that you hate, something that you grieve over, something that you mourn over, something that you are a sworn enemy to, even though it sometimes still clings to you in ways that you do not like.

There's a mental recognition of bankruptcy that flows into a sorrow over sin and now what we come to in verse 5 is we start to see something really, really special. We start to see what Jesus Christ does with that softened and changed heart. Christ forms a particular kind of character from that sorrow over sin. It's really remarkable to see the internal unity of these Beatitudes and the logical progression that they make. Look at verse 5 with me again, realizing that these are building on one another, they are not separate and unrelated statements, they are building on one another and describing the same kind of person. Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Now what is meekness? That's not a word that you hear much about in ordinary conversation. It's certainly not a word that comes up often in media reports or anything like that with the violence and degradation that is all around us. Meekness is not something that's prominent in the way the world thinks or even wants to discuss, and yet here it is at the core of what it means to be a Christian. It's pretty remarkable.

Now, the underlying Greek word is translated differently in different versions, and even depending on the text in which you find it. The New American Standard uses the word "gentle" here, but "meekness" is definitely a better translation; as you'll see, "meekness" has more nuance and a broader sense of semantic range than "gentleness" does. Let me just give you a simple working definition of meekness that you can write down, and then we're going to see that Scripture has an awfully lot to say about this character trait. What is meekness? Meekness is spiritual composure that is rooted in trust in God which responds in peace to conflict or adversity. Meekness is spiritual composure rooted in trust in God which responds in peace to conflict or adversity. There is a calmness in meekness. One of the things that is striking as you read about the character and life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones is that he was universally recognized as having this calm demeanor about him that made it easy for people to talk with him and unburden their hearts to him. He spoke with strength from the pulpit, and yet he was a calm man even as he faced death. Meekness is spiritual composure rooted in trusting God which responds in peace to conflict or adversity.

Now, immediately, just with that definition, you see that you're seeing something that is counter to everything cultural that we know. We're used to, if you hit me, I'm going to hit you back and hit you harder, and we're used to things being escalated when there's conflict, whether on a world national stage or in personal interactions. We're more used

to escalation, not this idea of composure and calm and peace, and we're going to see how that works out. And whether it's in relational matters of conflict, where this calmness has opportunity to manifest itself, or adverse circumstances and difficulties, you know, responding, you know, what is the response, is it one of agitation or composure? That's what this theme of meekness brings to mind. And having described it that way, composure, calmness, one of the things, and this is all by way of introduction, we'll fill this out from Scripture as we go along, what I want you to see that's so very critical to recognize is that we're talking about something that is an inward state of heart when we talk about meekness. It's an inward state of heart, a composure, a calmness. It is not correct to think about meekness merely as someone who has mild manners or a gentle disposition outwardly. It's not that. It's so much more than that. You can say that a dog has a good disposition, a gentle disposition, but isn't it obvious that Jesus is talking about something far more significant than what could be used to describe a mutt? A dog? It's far more than that and so let's unpack this as we go through Scripture.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," and what we're going to do tonight is we're going to let other Scriptures instruct us on what meekness is and where it comes from and how it works out in our lives, and the first thing that you need to realize is that, number 1, meekness starts in the heart. Meekness starts in the heart and this is fundamental to it all because meekness, beloved, meekness is an entire disposition of life. It is a way that you comprehensively approach everything, all of your relationships, all of your circumstances, all of your adversities. It is a comprehensive disposition of life and so we're talking about something that searches every aspect of our inner man when we talk about meekness. Meekness is something that defines your expectations from life and from relationships, and it shapes your reactions to life and to relationships. All of this is true because meekness comes from within; it is who you are in your inner man. And let me say this, and then we'll get into some Scripture that makes all of this so very plain and obvious to us, meekness, beloved, is something that is alien to the unsaved man. It is foreign to the disposition of the natural man in Adam. This is not the condition, this is not a disposition that you find in an unsaved man, and so it quickly becomes a point of discrimination, discernment, distinction is what I mean by that word discrimination, It becomes a manner of discerning the difference between people and a manner in which you can evaluate your own heart if you have questions about whether you are a Christian or not. One of the things about the Beatitudes, and I say this sympathetically, not at all in a confrontational way, you can test whether you're starting to understand the Beatitudes if they start to make you question whether you're really a Christian or not because the standard is so high, it is so lofty, it is so godly, and as James says, we all stumble in many ways. These Beatitudes are very searching to us, and so we accept that, and as we let them search us, they will humble us, and Christ will use that to conform us to his image.

Turn to Galatians 5 with me. Meekness starts in the heart, we could say in a different way is that meekness comes from God himself. Meekness comes from God himself. It is not something that you can conjure up by your own effort and you see that as we look at Galatians 5 beginning in verse 19, and these contrasts between what we'll see in these next three verses with the fruit of the Spirit help you distinguish and to understand by contrast what meekness is. Verse 19, "Now the works of the flesh," this is referring to the

principle that is operative in an unsaved man, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Now notice, beloved, that there are all kinds of different manifestations of sin that are described there. There are the fleshly carnal sins that we often think about when we think about a man being in sin, but there are also these inner attitudes of envy and anger and jealousy. There's the manifestation in relationships of strife and rivalries and divisions. Beloved, those kinds of things are the mark of someone, according to Scripture, according to what the Apostle Paul says writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says that those that are marked by characteristics like that will not inherit the kingdom of God. They will not inherit the kingdom of God. It does not matter what they say with their lips about themselves if their lives are marked by these kinds of destructive character traits and actions.

The life speaks of what is in the heart, Jesus says. In fact, it would be good for us to go to Mark 7 to simply make that point. Mark 7, as you turn there with me, Jesus said in Mark 7:20, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him." Jesus had earlier said, food doesn't defile a man, it goes into his mouth and then it's expelled. What comes out of the person is what defiles him. "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." People that act in this way, people that are this way are defiled. They are evil. They are not in the kingdom of God. It's important for us to take Scripture at face value and not excuse our sin, but let it speak and convict us as the case may be.

Now, with that said, going back to Galatians 5:22 and 23, as you turn back there, and remembering that we said that what the Sermon on the Mount in totality is describing, it is describing the fruit of repentance. It is showing us what true repentance looks like. Stated differently, it is showing us the signs of the new birth and the changes that are at work. We've said that about the Sermon on the Mount on many occasions and the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit that man cannot produce on his own. Well, beloved, then what does the Spirit start to produce over time in the life of the person that he brings into the kingdom of God? Remember that we're studying meekness; it would be easy to lose sight of that with the sidetracks that I've taken already.

Verse 22, Galatians 5.22, "But the fruit of the Spirit," what the Holy Spirit produces in a life, what is that? The singular fruit with multiple aspects to it, like one cluster of many luscious grapes. Verse 22, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness," put your finger on that word as I finish, "kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." I said put your finger on "kindness," I should have said to put it on "gentleness" when we came up to there because it is the word "gentleness," that is the noun form in the original language of the adjective "meek." It could have just as easily been translated there in verse 23, meekness, "The fruit of the

Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Beloved, what we're seeing here and what's so important for you to pay attention to is that biblical meekness comes from the Holy Spirit. It is something that the Spirit of God produces in a life. It is of marked, noticeable distinction from the way that the unsaved man thinks, lives, and has his being as we see in the contrast there in Galatians 5:19 to 21, in Mark 7:20 to 23. These evil, ungodly things come from a different spirit but the Spirit, when he's at work in the human heart, one of the things that he produces is this spirit of meekness, this spiritual composure that is rooted in trusting God, which responds in peace to conflict or adversity.

Now there's another way that you can see that this meekness is rooted in the person of God. There's another way that you can see that the fountain of this glorious character trait is the blessed Triune God himself and not something of human dimension. Look over at Matthew 11 with me, Matthew 11 in verses 28 and 29. This text will be familiar to you because it's Jesus speaking about himself and describing himself and his own inner character. Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am," there it is, "gentle and lowly in heart." It's the same word translated "meek" in Matthew 5. The translators with this word haven't always done us the best of favors when you're just reading it in English. "I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Christ is saying, "There is a composure about me. There is a peaceableness about me that you can come to in your state of agitation and find rest." You can find in Christ rest from the agitation and the distractions of the world. You can come to Christ and find forgiveness for your sin. You can come to Christ and find cleansing. You can find a gentle shepherd. You can find a good shepherd that will receive you. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, being himself, by his own self-testimony, meek in heart.

The Spirit of God produces meekness where he as is at work. Do you see it, beloved? Do you see how this is something that is inherent in the nature and essence of God himself? That this is a distinguishing mark of what God himself is like? A God of peace? And so it comes from God and it manifests itself initially. The seed of it is planted in the human heart in conversion and so it is to be, here's the thing now, now we start to put these things together, it really starts to take on a force and a momentum of its own that's very wonderful to see. Meekness, because it comes from God, and because salvation comes from God and is not a human work, meekness then is to be an operative principle in the life of every true believer. This is something that is to be at work in the heart and life of every single believer, because as we've seen in these Beatitudes, it's these people and these people alone who belong to the kingdom of God.

Now, if you can turn over to the book of 1 Peter 3 as the apostle addresses women within the church and sets forth a high and lofty standard of what ladies in the church should be like, he speaks to wives in chapter 3. He says there in chapter 3, verse 1, "wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and

pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear," watch it here, beloved, verse 4, "but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle," same word, meek, "the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

Peter holds up before women in the church and says what God calls you to is this peaceable, meek, gentle, quiet spirit that is precious in the sight of God and it has application to the men also. As you go on to verse 7, you read that word "likewise," and the idea is the character that I've been describing, the inner character about wives, likewise you husbands, manifest it yourselves. This verse, verse 7, does not use explicitly the term for meekness but it is connected to what he said about wives by that term "likewise." "Just as I spoke to the wives, you husbands likewise work it out in this way, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel," and on it goes, "so that your prayers may not be hindered."

And so, we see this meekness. It starts in the heart. Jesus said, "I'm gentle in heart." Wives, be gentle in your heart. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness in the heart. The heart. The heart. Do you see it? This goes to the very core of who we are and those of us that are prone to angry outbursts or dissatisfaction in life or sour spirits, all of us need to come back and say, "Lord, I've strayed here. I have strayed from the very core principle that is to mark a true believer." And so it becomes an occasion for us to repent and to examine ourselves, knowing that meekness comes from God, it is not natural to the carnal man. And if you find yourself even at this early stage, there's five points to this message, and we're only in the first one, and if you already feel horribly convicted, I sympathize with you. I guess I do too. But understand that the response to that is to come in a spirit of confession before the Lord, "Lord, I see that I fall short here. Your Word convicts me and I ask you, Father, in humble dependence, that the Spirit of God would change me and produce this in me, because the Spirit of God has the power to do that in my heart. I want to do that. I submit to the Spirit. Let your Spirit help me." You come and you dependently first ask for God for this meekness to be manifested in you rather than just immediately going and saying, "Well, what can I do differently?" It doesn't do any good to start acting differently if you haven't first dealt with that inner matter in your heart.

And so, brothers and sisters in Christ, I just ask it gently to you this evening, it's an appropriate, right question for a teacher to ask at a point like this. What is your heart like? What are you like on the inside? Are you content with your circumstances? Are you peaceable? Are the things that you say and the way that you present yourself to others, do they get a picture of peace or conflict from you? Is your heart content and peaceable or are you filled with anxiety because you don't really trust God? Are you filled with conflict with others because you have a retaliatory spirit? All of those things are on the table as we see what Christ is referring to in his Word, in his teaching here in Matthew 5. It's very, very searching and the true believer, the humble believer welcomes this. The true believer wants to manifest a spirit of righteousness. The true believer wants to be like Christ, even if he's frustrated by the fact that he's not and you yearn for that, you want

that, even when you're falling short. And so our most basic fundamental desires are exposed in one verse. It's amazing. It's the power of the Word of God as the Spirit of God applies it to our hearts. It starts in the heart, meekness does.

Point number 2: meekness trusts God. Meekness trusts God. Go back to Matthew 5 as we look at it again and let me help you see the immediate context in how these things fit together. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Now beloved, one of the aspects of meekness is that it's rooted in a poverty of spirit; it's rooted in a recognition that God owes me nothing. I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and therefore, I'm entitled to nothing. I don't have a spiritual bill of rights, which I am entitled to point to and say, "God and the world and my life deserves this, and I'm entitled to this. I expect this." There's none of that in true Christianity, because the true Christian realizes that he has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The true Christian realizes that there is none righteous, no, not one, that everything that Romans 3 says about a lack of righteousness applies to him, a recognition that what my sinfulness and my prior sins and even my present sins deserve is judgment from God. And there's this inner humility that says, "When I recognize that, then I realize that my only appeal is to grace, not what someone or what God owes me." There's none of that in meekness.

So the fundamental concept of being poor in spirit leads immediately to this humble submission to a holy God and accepts what God gives and, beloved, the true believer claims nothing else. The true believer, stay with me here. I want to give you a little bit of a word picture. The true believer looks at his bankrupt spirit, looks at how he sinned against God, mourns over it, sorrows over his sinfulness and in response to that in a spiritual way, he comes and he sits on his own ashes. He sits in grief as Job sat in grief in his own affliction. He sits on his ashes and is not shaking a fist at God, not presenting demands to God, just in humility recognizing, "This is who I am. I've fallen short of a holy God and I don't like that. I hate my sin." Beloved, you cannot simultaneously be conscious and hating your sin and at the same time have a demanding attitude toward a holy God. Those two things do not go together. Or stated differently, to have a resentful attitude toward God because your life isn't what you want it to be, those two things don't go together. You realize that you forfeited any claim with God in your sinfulness and therefore, anything that you have that is short of judgment is a recognition of grace.

Now, Matthew 5 echoes Psalm 37, and turn back in your Bibles to your Old Testament in Psalm 37. I'm going to read a verse and then go back and get the context of Psalm 37 here in a moment. Chapter 37, Psalm 37:11, we read that the meek shall inherit the land. This language parallels Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Here in Psalm 37:11, we read, "the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace." There is a promise to those who are truly meek. This Spirit-born meekness, there is a promise that the outcome is good for those who have submitted their hearts to Christ in this manner.

Now, this is where it gets really interesting and really good. In the context of Psalm 37, look at what this meekness is built upon, what it flows from, what the context of true meekness is. Remember, the point that we're looking at here is meekness trusts God and we see that Matthew 5:5 is almost a direct quotation from Psalm 37:11. Well, what's the context that informs that? Oh, is this ever good. Verse 7, Psalm 37, "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him." Do you see the spiritual composure? "Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land." The meek shall inherit the land, those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land, and they do so even in the midst of attacks from wicked people; in the midst of living amongst wicked people, which is all around us in the world in which we live, the meek person has his focus, his trust, his composure set upon the God of his salvation. So that in verse 10, we read, "In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there."

Now, beloved, we can say it this way: meek people trust God even when they are surrounded by wicked people. Meek people trust God, knowing that God will settle the accounts. We just sang just a few moments ago, "Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet." That line in that hymn from "This Is My Father's World" is expressing a meek spirit that says, "Because this is my Father's world, I trust him even when the wrong seems so strong in the world around me, seems so strong in my personal life, God is the ruler yet. I'm confident in the outcome because I trust him and I'm content to be in his hand." Nothing else matters by comparison. The wicked will be cut off, the righteous will be blessed in the end, and humble faith will be rewarded. That's the spirit of meekness.

And let's say this, I didn't make this point at the beginning: meekness is not weakness. Meekness is strong and yet composed. Meekness is strong because it trusts in the God who reigns over all. And if I can just remind you of one thing that goes back nine years in our pulpit ministry, almost nine years, go back to Psalm 1. Six verses altogether, we're not going to read them all. But Psalm 1 opens on this statement of the blessed of the righteous man, the one who is under the dominion of Yahweh, who is in the spiritual kingdom, and there is this blessing, there is this privilege, there is this wonderful position that the godly man has under the God of his salvation. I think I said I wasn't going to read it all. I changed my mind. "Blessed is the man," Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers." He doesn't walk there. He doesn't stand there. He doesn't sit there. He conducts his life in a different realm from all of that and the realm in which he conducts himself is the law of God, the Word of God.

Verse 2, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Look at the composure. Look at the strength of meekness described in Psalm 1:3, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." You get the picture of strength, stability,

flourishing, vibrant. This is meekness and this is the Psalm that opens up the entire 150-chapter Psalter.

Verse 4, "The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD," here's the point, meekness trusts God, "for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." The meek person looks at Psalm 1:6 and says, "I rest my life on that promise of the Word of God. My confidence is found in the way of God." As Job said, "He knows the way that I take. When he's tried me, I'll come forth as gold." This is meekness. You see why we talk about trusting God? The biblical principle of meekness is set in the context of the adversity and the conflict that wicked people create and inflict. Meekness says, "I'm content to trust God in the midst of all of it."

So meekness trusts God. Meekness is spiritual composure rooted in trust in God that responds in peace to conflict and adversity. It's remarkable. This is – oh beloved, this is fundamental. This is basic to what it means to be a Christian and as you grow in Christ, my friends, you should find that you're not as easily agitated over difficulty and problems and conflict as you once were. You should find that there's a growing ability to absorb that, accept it, and trust the Lord for the outcome rather than immediately rushing to respond or to, you know, retaliate or whatever the case may be. You can do that, beloved. You can do that. You are intended as a Christian to live that way because the power to live that way comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit in your heart and not from your natural strength and your natural man. Imagine just in marriage, for example, imagine if you had a husband and a wife who were both meek and responded to each other and responded to little irritations and things like that with a meek spirit. That would be wonderful, wouldn't it? This is life in the kingdom. This is glorious. It creates spiritual composure despite the external environment that you find yourself in. It comes from within. I love this.

Now, point number 3, and remember, all we're doing here, we're just tracing through Scripture what the Bible says about this spiritual characteristic. The third point, which I'm grateful to see so well manifested in the life of Truth Community Church, is this third point: meekness is teachable. Meekness is teachable. A meek spirit is a teachable spirit. Someone who is resistant to the Word of God, someone that fights back and is contentious is not meek. And it has to be this way. It could be no other way. Again, just think about the context in which we're speaking, the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and now meekness. Beloved, someone who is genuinely brokenhearted and contrite over their sin is obviously, naturally going to be responsive to the Word of God. Having realized that I am a sinner and a rebel against God and having repented of that, then my repentance brings me into submission to the God that I once resisted. I turn from my prior resistance and now come to him in a spirit of submissiveness, of yieldedness, of being teachable. That spiritual mourning, having been convicted by the Word of God of your sin, now produces an opposite reaction that says, "Whereas before I resented and resisted his Word, now I accept it, now I love it, now I long to know and obey it." The spiritual

mourning of verse 4 softens the heart to become like it is in verse 5, blessed are the meek, and one of the things about the meek is that they are willing to learn from God's Word.

You say, "I haven't seen that in a verse yet." Well, then turn to James 1. Turn to James 1. I'm not making this up. Meekness is teachable under the Word of God. Meekness does not mock the Word of God, does not harden its heart against the Word of God. It yields. James 1:19, meekness is teachable. Go back to verse 18 because it speaks about the act of regeneration, which we've been emphasizing here. What happens when God brings someone forth to new life? Verse 18, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." What happens when God brings someone to new birth, gives him new life, and he's now a believer? What happens to that person inside his heart? Well, keep reading in the context. Verse 19, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore," therefore in light of the new birth, in light of the call to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, therefore in light of the fact that angry men do not produce the righteousness of God, in light of all of that, what are you supposed to do? Verse 21, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Receive with meekness the implanted word.

The meek man, the peaceable man, the gentle man is teachable. He or she hears the word and doesn't fight against it, doesn't buck back against it. In the late 60s, a 10-volume lexical source known as the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament was put forth. It's a standard lexical work. And speaking about meekness in this context, in James 1, the writer of the article said this, this meekness refers to a meek and humble readiness to be taught by the Word of God without flaring up against the teacher. Gentleness is a mark of the truly righteous and stands in pleasing contrast to bitter zeal and contentiousness. Let me read that again. Remember, our point is meekness is teachable. The meek man peaceably hears the Word. I'm quoting from a lexical expert on the term who was referring to James 1 and said this. He says that it refers to a meek and humble readiness to be taught by the Word of God without flaring up against the teacher. Gentleness is a mark of the truly righteous and stands in pleasing contrast to bitter zeal and contentiousness. Beloved, I'll just say this simply, that insight gives you discernment for the times in which we live.

Meekness is teachable under the Word of God. Meekness trusts God. Meekness starts in the heart. It brings us to a fourth point: meekness is peaceable. Meekness is peaceable and, beloved, I never cease to just be utterly amazed and astonished at the multifaceted splendor of the Word of God. We have seen that the eight Beatitudes from verse 3 to 10, that they are different aspects of the same person, the same spiritual character. They all fit together. The white beam of light, the white beam of new birth hits the prism of the Beatitudes and it shatters into different multicolored splendor which we see in these different aspects of the Beatitudes. Well, what you see here tonight is that the beam of light, you know, just pick a color, the red beam that comes after the light is shattered through the prism and you see the different colors displayed of the Beatitudes, the aspect of meekness hits another prism and shatters into a whole different display of its own

characteristics. One character produced by the Spirit of God showing forth the eight Beatitudes and we study meekness and we find that meekness itself is a multi-splendored marvel of consideration. It's teachable, it's peaceable.

Point number 4: meekness is peaceable. Meekness is peaceable. You're in James. Let's stay in James and go to James 3. Meekness is peaceable, beloved, and that's why a unified church is such a wonderful place to be, is because Spirit-filled believers are peaceable and it becomes an oasis in the midst of the violent society of conflict all around us. We come together in a spirit of meekness and we find peace and we have an oasis where we can, "I'm at home here."

James 3:13, "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom." There's a wisdom, there's an understanding, there's a goodness to meekness. He goes on to say, "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above," you see again, beloved, the source of these spiritual virtues, it comes from God not from within the carnal heart of man, this is something supernatural. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." The meekness of wisdom leading to this purity, peaceableness, gentleness, mercy, good fruits in contrast to bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and all those carnal things that Scripture describes. Meekness manifests itself in a peaceable spirit.

Now, what does that kind of meekness, that peaceable meekness look like? Well, turn over to the book of Colossians. Actually, turn back a few pages to Colossians 3. Colossians 3. Oh, just the indescribable unity of the Word of God, written by different authors at different times and different places to different audiences, and the same unified message comes through. In verse 9, well, verse 8, "now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." God gave you a new heart. God made you a new man, and you are to live in light of what God has made you to be, is what he is saying here. My point is, is that you see once again in this text, the source of these things is God himself. This is what God produces in the lives of those that he has truly saved. This is a fundamental distinguishing characteristic of true Christianity, of truly new birth as opposed to false conversions.

Verse 11, you see the fact that this is true of all in the body of Christ, "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." Christ the source. Christ the blesser. Christ the teacher. Christ the meek and humble one.

Verse 12, now here comes the responsibility, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Meekness is peaceable. Meekness is forgiving. Meekness is gracious, gracious from within the heart, gracious with what it says, gracious in the way it conducts itself.

Think about our Lord. Our Lord was provoked leading up to his crucifixion. They beat him. They spat upon him. They mocked him. They thrust thorns into his brow. And what did he do? What did he do, beloved? Like a lamb that was led to slaughter, so he did not open his mouth. He didn't retaliate. In the midst of the false witnesses raised up against him, he stayed silent. As he hung on the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Beloved, this is a gentle and humble heart being manifested before you in our Lord Jesus Christ. One commentator says this in this context of peaceable meekness, and it's a great opportunity for each one of us to examine our own hearts. "Meekness describes the person who is not resentful. He bears no grudge. Far from mulling over injuries received, he finds refuge in the Lord and commits his way entirely to him."

Does not meekness sound so wonderfully appealing to you? Isn't this a desirable character trait? Isn't this what you long to be? Isn't this what you would long to see manifested in the world around you? Can you imagine a meek world where people are not resentful and don't bear grudges and don't mull over real or perceived injuries, and they just take refuge in the Lord and they commit their way to him? You have a body of believers like that, yeah, they can get along with each other because, you know what? Yeah, maybe you've sinned against me, but you know what? I've sinned against others. I've sinned against God. I don't need to make a point of this. It's peaceable as a result, rooted in their own poverty of spirit. God doesn't owe me anything. I'm content with what I have. I don't have to react.

Now, beloved, understand that anyone can be agreeable when he or she is living in prosperity. Anyone can be agreeable when they're being praised and honored and everybody responds well to them. That's not the test of meekness. That's not the test of meekness at all. The question that you and I have to ask ourselves is how do I react when someone is unkind or critical to me? How do I react when I'm on the receiving end of unkindness? How do you and I respond when things are not as you would like them to be? Pretty searching, isn't it? Aren't you glad that God is a forgiving God? Aren't you glad that God's a gracious God, a good God who receives sinners and washes and cleanses them in Christ? I know I am. Meekness is spiritual composure rooted in trusting God which responds in peace to conflict or adversity. Peaceable.

Now, fifth and finally: meekness is blessed. Meekness is blessed. Go back to Matthew 5. God has an inheritance for the gentle, for the meek. He will bless the meek. He promises to do it. God cannot lie. It's impossible for him to lie. It's impossible for him to break a promise. And so what we read in verse 5, for those who are born again, we see the promise of God that lies ahead for them and them alone. Verse 5, "Blessed are the meek,

for they," just like all the other Beatitudes, it's the same spirit, the same sense, I should say, they and they alone "shall inherit the earth." Only the meek are going to be on the receiving end of the blessing of God and so these are matters of great eternal consequence.

He will bless us, and it says they shall inherit the earth. Now, beloved, we're only going to spend a moment on this, but I just want to tell you that there is a present aspect to this inheritance that we have right now, and there is a future aspect to this possession yet to come. Again, as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, what is this inheritance of which Paul speaks? Well, it's too lofty for a sinful tongue like mine to express, but we can read it from Scripture. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:21, "So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." He's saying, because you are in Christ and everything belongs to Christ and is under his Lordship, there's a sense in which you share in the inheritance that belongs all to Christ. Because you are Christ's, you're an heir of all things. And that's our position now. That's what we have now. You know, it's an inheritance that will certainly become ours. We have the title deed, and it's just a matter of taking future possession of it. That's what belongs to every true believer in Christ.

Then you read in Revelation 20:6, about the righteous, about the redeemed, "they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." When Christ returns and establishes his kingdom on the earth, we're going to reign with him. We'll inherit the earth when our Lord and our King and our Savior comes and establishes his reign. He will own us. He will have us, is what I mean by that. We will be under his authority, under his blessing, and he's somehow sharing the reign and delegating his reign with us. Wherever that's at, I want to run to it, don't you? Wherever we can find that, I want to run to that. That sounds a whole lot better than this world and this life. No wonder Paul ends 1 Corinthians and says, "O Lord, come!" No wonder the Bible ends on the note, "Lord Jesus, come quickly!" I want this, not what I see all around me today. And beloved, when we enter into that, there's going to be no question that the meek are blessed. The meek are the privileged recipients of divine favor. Who will be there? Who will be sharing in that reign with Christ? You'll know them now by their meekness.

Let's pray together.

Father, we think of the words of David in Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Father, may that be true for each of us that you're deeply at work in our hearts by your Spirit, through your Word, forming in us these spiritual characteristics that are on the receiving end of your blessing. For those that stand outside, perhaps tonight in this room for the first time seeing, "That is not me, Father, let that conviction drive them to Christ, that they might come to him for new life, for forgiveness, to enter into this life of meekness. Father, make us each one meek, Father, meek from our hearts. Meek, Father, trusting you. Meek, being teachable. Meek, being peaceable. And knowing the fullness of the blessing that you promise upon those that share in that life of Christ, which comes from him. So bless us to that end and make

us strong that we might act like men and, Father, to glorify you in everything that you send our way. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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