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## Meekness or Weakness in the Capitol? (The Sermon on the Mount) Matthew 5:1-12

***Who is the most influential person in the capitol? The governor? Senate president? Speaker of the House? A well-known successful lobbyist? In the world's thinking you rise to such positions of power and influence through strength, power, ability, self-assurance and aggressiveness. However, Jesus makes a striking statement when He proclaims it is the meek who shall inherit the earth. This is in stark contrast to what the world says brings achievement. Jesus taught us that it is the meek - those who are humble and gentle - who will find true happiness and success.***

As Jesus continues His description of the qualities of those who follow Him, He exclaims:

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

Matthew 5:5

“Meek” could also be understood as humble or gentle. With such a striking statement by Jesus we should seek to understand what it means to be meek, especially in the challenging environment of the capitol.

### **Meekness Defined**

Meekness is considered to be one of the fundamental Christian virtues in God's Word. Not only do we find it here as one of Jesus' beatitudes, but we also see it marked throughout Scripture as a characteristic of followers of God. It is often seen in the Old Testament as a description of those whom God would bless. (Ps. 9:12; 10:17; 22:26; Is. 11:4; 29:19; Zeph. 2:3) It is listed by Paul as part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) In several other places believers are encouraged to develop and demonstrate meekness. Since this is such a vital characteristic, let us look at the definition of meekness.

Jesus likely was reflecting on Psalm 37 when He presented this beatitude. There, David writes: ***“The humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.”*** (Psalm 37:11). The whole Psalm speaks of those who *trust in the Lord, delight themselves in the Lord, commit their ways to the Lord, and rest in the Lord*. These are the ones who will be truly blessed, or, as Jesus describes it, “will inherit the earth”. Psalm 37 was speaking of an earthly land and an earthly prosperity. Jesus is speaking of the spiritual blessings of salvation and eternal life in heaven.

### **What Meekness is Not**

Due to the common misconception of the definition of meekness, it is particularly important for us to consider

what meekness or gentleness is **NOT**. Meekness is not weakness. It isn't cowardice or a wishy-washy lack of conviction. It does not suggest indecisiveness or lack of confidence. It does not imply shyness or a withdrawn personality. It is not simply “niceness”. Meekness is best defined as gentleness or “strength under control”. This is best demonstrated when we consider some of Jesus' own words and actions. He is our best example of one who is meek, yet He got very angry and spoke very strongly in certain situations. Being meek does not mean we never get angry. It means we get angry at the right things and at the right times.

### **What Meekness Is**

As always, we must read this statement in the context of Jesus' whole sermon, the rest of His teaching, as well as the rest of Scripture. Meekness grows out of the first two Beatitudes. One who is poor in spirit, recognizing their spiritual poverty and helplessness, and one who genuinely mourns over their sin before God and against others, will certainly have an attitude of humility and meekness. In the original language, the word for “meek” was also used to speak of tamed animals, soothing medicine, mild words, and gentle breezes. The Greek idea behind the word “meek” or “gentle” was about balance between getting angry over everything and getting angry over nothing. This certainly carries over to the biblical idea behind it, which is that we certainly may get angry, but we get angry over the right things.

A meek person is one who is gentle, mild, tenderhearted, patient, and submissive. Perhaps meekness is of particular relevance in the capitol community as it refers to **“strength or power under control”** or the right use of authority and power. It carries with it the idea of a submissive attitude towards God and others and also has the idea of humility. The illustration of this word is that of a horse who has been trained to be ridden or to

pull a wagon. The horse is a very powerful animal, but that power is under control as it submits to the bit and bridle.

### **Meekness Expressed**

Again, the best example of gentleness or meekness was Christ Himself. Although He suffered greatly during His life and death, He always expressed this character quality of meekness.

***Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...***

**1 Peter 2:21-23**

Jesus showed us that one who is meek does not get angry or retaliate for things done against our own person. Jesus' anger was reserved for those who dishonored God and His Word.

Paul encourages leaders when they are faced with the task of confronting those in error to do so with meekness or gentleness: ***"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness."*** (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

### **Meekness rewarded**

Once again, the promise made to those who are meek will find its ultimate fulfillment in God's future kingdom. Paul called the followers of Christ ***"...children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ... (Romans 8:16)***. He explains in 1 Corinthians 6 that believers will ***"judge the world and judge angels."*** True blessedness, happiness, and success will come to those who have had their lives changed by faith in Christ when they reach the heavenly kingdom.

However, there is a very real sense in which the meek inherit the earth in this present day and age, here in this life. One who is truly meek will always be fully satisfied and content, regardless of circumstances. One who is seeking worldly happiness, wealth, or success will never be satisfied.

### **Meekness for Political Leaders**

Jesus says meekness or gentleness will be characteristic of His true followers, regardless of their walk of life. He promises that those who are meek will be truly blessed and successful in life. There are some good biblical reasons that should encourage you why meekness, gentleness, and humility ought to be part of a political leader's life.

### **God Raises up leaders**

Daniel served under at least three of the most powerful rulers of the day. He constantly reminded them it was God who had set them in their positions of leadership. (Daniel

2:20-21; 2:37; 4:32; 5:18). While certainly a lot of personal ability and hard work goes into winning elections and achieving positions of influence and leadership, if a leader remembers that it is ultimately God who places them in positions of leadership, it will help them maintain an attitude of meekness, gentleness, and humility.

### **Leaders are God's Servants**

Paul states in Romans 13 that governments and government leaders are established by God. (Romans 13:1) He goes on to call government leaders "ministers" or "servants" of God. (Romans 13:4). Peter describes leaders as "sent by God" (1 Peter 2:13-14)

### **Leaders are Held Accountable by God**

I believe we see throughout Scripture that God holds rulers accountable both for how they live and how they lead. Pharaoh (Ex. 5-14), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4), Belshazzar (Dan. 5), and Herod (Acts 12) were all political leaders who were judged by God for how they lived and led.

These truths are a reminder for all of us how we should relate to our leaders, even those with whom we disagree strongly. In writing to a young pastor Paul encouraged him to teach believers: ***"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men."*** **Titus 3:1-2**. This certainly describes an attitude of meekness toward all, specifically toward our leaders. We must ask ourselves if it describes our attitudes toward leaders, especially those not on "our side".

Who is truly the most influential person in the capitol? It is someone influencing others for Christ and for eternity. It could be a legislator or leader. However, it may well be some "unknown" staffer or worker meekly seeking to serve Christ and others and make a difference for God's kingdom.

***Are you humble and meek in your relationship before God? This is the result of being poor in spirit and mourning over sin.***

***Are you meek in your relationship with others? This will be a characteristic of those who are truly followers of Christ.***

## **CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES**

Thursdays

8:00 AM Government Org. Conference Room (East Wing)

12:00 PM Senate President's Conference Room