

## **“The Path to Joy, Part 2”**

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Scriptural Foundation: Matthew 5:1-12, NIV

### **The Beatitudes**

<sup>1</sup>**Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:**

<sup>3</sup>*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>4</sup>*Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

<sup>5</sup>*Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

<sup>6</sup>*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

<sup>7</sup>*Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

<sup>8</sup>*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

<sup>9</sup>*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called sons of God.*

<sup>10</sup>*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>11</sup>*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

The Beatitudes are eight attitudes that Jesus tells us that mark the path of life, the path of meaning, and the path of joy. These are attitudes that are the birthright of God's people, those who have been changed by God's grace. These are not attitudes that we can manufacture on our own, but they are attitudes that come to us as a result of our faith in Jesus and His dynamic work in our lives.

Have you ever wondered why the quest for joy is a confusing maze of dead-ends and unending corners? Why is sweet contentment and bliss so elusive? Many in their pursuit for joy arrive at Solomon's despair when he writes, in Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, NIV,

<sup>10</sup> I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;  
I refused my heart no pleasure.

My heart took delight in all my work,  
and this was the reward for all my labor.

<sup>11</sup> Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done  
and what I had toiled to achieve,  
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;  
nothing was gained under the sun.

The editors of Psychology Today once published a questionnaire designed to answer the question, "What is happiness and how do we obtain it?" After reading the results of this questionnaire, the editors discovered that the pursuit of happiness was, for many, like chasing a black cat in a dark room at midnight when one is not even sure that the cat is there.

A great reason why joy flies out of our reach is that we fail to understand our own fallenness and thus we do not, and cannot, connect ourselves to God through faith in His Son Jesus. We like to think that joy can be really found within ourselves; that it is within the measure of our own efforts and man often sneers at the idea that our soul has been so corrupted by sin that joy really is impossible and that this soul of ours is not the barren says that it is, left in its natural state, but rather it offers fruit of its own that is satisfying.

The great 17<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher and scientist, Blaise Pascal, offered a clear warning for those who considered that man held the answers to his own problems. Pascal would say, “It is in vain, o men, that you seek within yourselves the cure for all of your miseries. All of your insight has led to the knowledge that it is not within yourselves that you discover the true and the good. The philosophers promised them to you, but they were not able to keep this promise. They do not know what your nature is. How should they have provided you with a cure for ills which they have not even understood?” That is a great question, isn’t it?

He goes on to say, “Your principle maladies are pride, which cuts you off from God, and sensuality, which binds you to the earth.”

In Matthew 5, Jesus reveals that the path to joy plows through pride and sensuality that blocks our way to true joy and happiness. Here Jesus reveals eight attitudes which mark the souls of those who have been given redeeming grace and life itself, and if you and I are to obtain this and hold onto it, we would be wise to carefully consider Jesus' words. Each line is pregnant with significance.

As I have made my way through the study of the Beatitudes I have found myself at the end of the week simply in a sense of absolute weakness and inability to describe all that God has for us here. In Verses 1 and 2 we read the context,

<sup>1</sup>Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup>and he began to teach them...

We come to understand that this entire sermon is primarily delivered to disciples and these first twelve verses in particular mark out for us a description of a transformed life that is true of every believer and of every follower, and this description is given to help us gain the assurance about God’s work in our lives and the encouragement to persevere. It is important for us to understand that these eight statements are not steps which we climb to gain Heaven itself, or to gain some acceptance from God or forgiveness from Him. No, it is by grace we are saved through faith and not of works, lest anyone should boast. It is a gift from God.<sup>1</sup> We come to understand that Jesus is not outlining for us a ladder which we climb to get into Heaven, but rather it is a description of what happens when God really transforms a life.

Unbelievers also, however, are listening into this sermon. We discover that at the end of Chapter 7, in Verse 28, when it says,

<sup>28</sup>When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching...

There is something here for the unbeliever as well and if today you have come into church and you are not born again, you have not yet committed yourself to following Jesus in faith, then these eight statements are given for you to recognize your need for God, for, as you consider them, you will undoubtedly come to realize that this is a standard you cannot reach through your own efforts, and they are given to you to help you recognize your need for God to transform you and for God to change you. These become a call for you to humble yourself before Him and to ask from Him all that He has in Jesus Christ. Ask for Him to accept you, not on the basis of merit, but on the basis of mercy.

We come to these eight attitudes and as we look at each attitude we understand that each attitude is linked to the others. These are not disjointed descriptions, eight unrelated ideas, but rather these are connected in intricate relationship to each other, so that those that are mentioned at first give birth to those that follow; those that are before are always necessary in order to give rise to those that are mentioned later. They are as stories in a building – each one

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:5

builds upon the other and without the first you cannot have the second and without the second there could be no third and without the third there could be no fourth, and so on.

The first attitude we looked at in an earlier study is that attitude of a bankrupt spirit. Jesus said, in Verse 3,

<sup>3</sup>*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

The Lord must first make us aware of our spiritual poverty and our spiritual emptiness before He can fill us. "In me there dwells no good thing. Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling,"<sup>2</sup> this is the right expression before God of a bankrupt spirit.

The second attitude we looked at was a sorrowful sensitivity. Jesus said, in Verse 4,

<sup>4</sup>*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."*

An understanding of our poverty of spirit leads us to a mourning over our sin that creates such a poverty and causes us to be sorrowful over those deficiencies which separate us from God.

Now we come to the third which is a meek responsiveness. In Verse 5, which is the focus, we read,

<sup>5</sup>*"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."*

Again, this third rests upon the two because no one becomes meek until they first recognize who they are before God and they have a right estimation of themselves and they realize that they are empty in soul and that they are beggars before God. Then, no one is meek until they also begin to mourn over the fact that they have fallen so short of what we ought to be and of what God created us to be.

Charles Spurgeon would write, "Self-righteousness is never meek. The man who is proud of himself will be quite sure to be hard-hearted in his dealings with others. To reach this rung of the ladder of Light he must first set his feet upon the other two. There must be a poverty of spirit and mourning of heart before there will become a gracious meekness of which our text speaks."

In this study we are going to look at the meaning of meekness, then the promise of meekness, and then a couple of applications of meekness.

Let's begin with the meaning of meekness. As we read Verse 5 we want to understand what a startling statement it is. We don't want to read it as a religious phrase, but it is a phrase to ponder, "What does it take to inherit the earth? What does it take to get ahead in life?" Here is what Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth."

I have to ask the question, "Do we really believe that this is true in all of the arenas of our life? Does this work in the 'real world'?" I am talking about the real world of the market place, of sales and business and forward motion in a career. Is it really true that blessed are the meek; that these are the one's who get ahead; that they are the one's who inherit the earth? Is that really true?

Is that true in the arena of sports; on the gridiron of the football field or on the basketball court or on the baseball diamond? Is it true that it is the meek who inherit the earth?

What about the arena of education and of scholarly esteem?

What about the personal arena of our own families and brothers and sisters? Is it the meek?

What about among the nations?

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<sup>2</sup> "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me," Augustus M. Toplady

Are we sure that we really believe this for certainly I tell you this cuts across and against everything that the world teaches us from the beginning when we are born until the last day we live. The philosopher Nietzsche said, when he looked at the ethics of Jesus that are bound up in the Beatitudes, "We are listening to the most seductive lie history has ever heard." He comes to this verse and he rephrases it and he says, "Assert yourself; it is the arrogant who take over the earth." That is pretty much what the world believes as to what this atheistic philosopher says so these two opposing standards wrestle for our souls allegiance.

We have to ask the question, "Who will win over our souls? Will it be Jesus or Nietzsche?" A soul that says, "I really do have to assert myself. It is nice to come to church and think about being meek, but on Monday morning I had better hit the ground running with aggression or I will lose."

Then we have to ask the question, "Not only who will win the allegiance of our soul, but who is really right, is it Jesus or is it Nietzsche? Do we really have to assert ourselves for the aggressive and the arrogant to take over the earth?" Or, do we ask the question, "What does it really mean to be meek?" That is important for us to understand what Jesus is saying.

Meekness does not imply what we often think it does and that is weakness or indecisiveness or passivity. Jesus only gave one description of Himself and that is found in Matthew 11:29, when He says of Himself, "I am meek and humble at heart." That is the term that Jesus used to describe His own life and yet, who was Jesus? He was the most powerful, forceful, decisive man ever to walk the earth. Remember, He is still the raging storm. Does that sound like one who is meek? Remember, He confronted kings. Does that sound like someone who is indecisive? Remember, He is the One who cleansed the Temple and He is the One who quieted a fearsome demoniac. Is that one who is passive? Indeed, He is the One who raised people from the dead and resurrected even Himself.

Jesus, far from embracing a passive life, rejected it. He actively engaged this world and He engaged it in a way that the Father set before Him, for the Father sent Him into this world to engage this world, not to be distant and remote from it. Being meek ought not to conjure up the image of a timid and seclusive librarian.

So what does it mean to be meek? In order for us to get our minds around what Jesus is saying, first it will help us to consider how the Greeks used this term from this same time period. Secondly, it will help us to see how this term is used in Scripture.

From Greek literature, Aristotle was a philosopher who applauded this virtue of meekness and he used this term to describe its virtue. For Aristotle, the virtues of life always were in balance. There was an in-between point between an excess and a deficiency. For instance, he said that courage was a virtue because it stood in the middle between cowardice and foolhardy actions. It held the right balance.

Generosity was a virtue because it held the balance between stinginess and a profligate wastefulness of life or materialism. Generosity was a virtue because it held these two things in check.

Aristotle said that meekness was a virtue because it stood in the middle between excessive anger and uncontrolled rage and the inability to show anger at all. He describes the meek man as one who is angry on the right occasion and with the right people and at the right moment and for the right length of time. That is how he describes meekness, the same term that Matthew uses in sharing with us Jesus' sermon.

William Barkley, a commentator on Matthew, would write, "It would be appropriate to translate this Beatitude, 'Blessed is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.'" That is a new way of thinking about meekness, isn't it? I believe that we can look to the example of Jesus for this; angry at the right time when He cleansed the Temple and giving strong words to the Pharisees, but never angry at the wrong time. When reviled He did not revile in return. I believe that this is a limited explanation but it does apply to one aspect of meekness.

In Greek literature, however, there is also another way that this term was used. There was a young soldier in the Peloponnesian War who wrote to his fiancé about a gift that he had for her. It was a gift of a beautiful, stunning, white stallion and he described this animal that he was bringing to her as "the most magnificent animal I have ever seen. He responds obediently to the slightest command. He allows his master to direct him to his full potential. He is a meek

horse.” When he is describing that, is he saying that this horse is one with no spirit and it an old codger that can barely get around in life and is good only for a pony ride where children ride where the horses follow nose-to-end, clopping along very weakly and deliberately? No, he is saying that this is a remarkable horse that is one of the most spirited horses that he had ever seen and it is a magnificent animal. Every one who sees it stands in awe, and yet, it is meek because it is not wild. It listens attentively to the commands of the rider, the one who is the master, and it responds appropriately. Here, this word “meek” is tied up with the idea of great power, yet power that is under control.

We forfeit meekness in two ways. First, when we exert no power in this world, with no real energy, and a failure to overcome our tendency to be passive and our tendency to hold back. For instance, when we hear others gossip, a lack of meekness would cause us to say, “I am not going to say anything,” but meekness steps in and says, “I think that is wrong and I want to promote the reputation of others and not allow their names to be run down when I hear others gossip.”

One evening I was talking with one of my sons who works at Cold Stone Creamery late at night. He came home about midnight and I asked him how his evening went. He was talking to me about how at a break several of his co-workers were talking about one of the managers in an ill way. He said, “Dad, I had to tell them, ‘I don’t think that true about this person. I thing this person is a pretty good person.’” I couldn’t help but think of the message I had prepared and I said, “Praise God, there is meekness.” My son wasn’t willing to let it slide or let alone join in as is often our temptation, but there was an action and an energy applied to move forward to righteousness. Meekness is forfeited when we have no energy and no power and no initiative to step forward.

Meekness is also forfeited when there is no control over the power that is exerted in our life. When we discipline our children meekness is forfeited when we discipline them in anger and when we are harsh and explosive; when we have a critical spirit and we say things that are unkind and unloving. This is a loss of control and that is a loss of meekness.

These are ideas we get about meekness from Greek literature, but the best place to understand what meekness is all about is from the Scriptures. This Beatitude is unique from the other seven in this way: this Beatitude is clearly a quotation, or an illusion, to an Old Testament Scripture. The others seem as though they come from either Jesus as being the Source of Truth Himself or from His application of all of the truths that He, in His omniscience and wisdom, possesses in Himself. Here He borrows from David’s words in Psalm 37; words that were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We come to recognize that Jesus, as man, was a man who invested Himself in the Scriptures as well. He was the One who said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”<sup>3</sup> What a great example He provides as the God-man for us.

In Psalm 37:11, we read almost the exact words that Jesus uses in Matthew 5,

<sup>11</sup> But the meek will inherit the land...

This promise is a parallel statement to what he said in Verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

From these two, almost parallel verses, we come to understand that a meek person is one who hopes in the Lord. From this we ask the question: what does it mean to “hope” in the Lord? The picture of what it means to hope in the Lord has already been given to us in Psalm 37:3-8,

<sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good...<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD...<sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him...<sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him...<sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret...<sup>9</sup> ...those who hope in the LORD...

All of those statements are descriptions of what it means to be a person who hopes in the Lord, and in these verses we find a perfect description of meekness. Meekness is one who, for instance, commits their way to the Lord and who trusts in Him. In Hebrew the word “commit” literally can be translated “to roll”. When it says that they commit their ways to the Lord that means they roll their ways upon the Lord; that is to say, their problems, their finances, their

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 4:4

business, the family, their health, their fear, and their frustrations are taken and rolled upon the Lord. That is what it means to hope in God and be meek. It is recognition, “I do not have what is required to find my way through all these difficulties, all these questions, all these problems, all these frustrations, all these fears, and all these real-life issues. I am going to roll them over onto the Lord.” As such, as meek ones, we entrust our lives to God in all of these matters, because we believe that God is strongly at work for us. We don’t have to push and we don’t have to shove and we don’t have to shout to see life work for us, rather we expect God to reward us if only we would believe. We live that way and that is what it means to be meek; that we don’t have to shove, and shout, and push, and climb, and fight, and scratch, and knock others out of the way. We believe that God cares for us and we roll these things over to the Lord and say, “Lord, these are in your hands and in your hands you are abundant in your kindness.”

Furthermore, one who hopes in the Lord and is described as meek is one who is still before the Lord and waits upon Him. In Verse 7, again, we read,

<sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him...

Meekness remains calm in the midst of a violent storm. In the midst of trials, meekness is not pushed into a frenzied state to attempt to get out of the trial immediately or to try to fix the problem, but the first response of a meek person is one of immense calm and confidence. This doesn’t mean that we become passive in the midst of the storm, but it does mean that we become very peaceful. We are not pushed by our fears to act in a way, or toward other people, so a steady calm dominates our life.

Look at the next characteristic in Verse 8,

<sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath...

In other words, meekness gives power to absorb adversity and to absorb hurtful actions without lashing back. A person who is not meek, what is the response when someone hurts them? They say, “I have to knock this person off of their pedestal because they are going to continue to hurt me if I don’t. Furthermore, I am a little angry at them and I want them to hurt like I hurt.” Jesus says, “No, refrain from anger and don’t allow opposition and malice directed toward them from others to rattle them and produce bitter energy.” They know that God is just and will vindicate them in the best way and in the best time.

Furthermore, a meek one doesn’t quarrel with God and begin to complain and criticize His ways and His will.

I enjoy the story of a man coming up to a farmer friend of his and asking, “What kind of weather are we going to have tomorrow?” The farmer replied, “We shall have the kind of weather that pleases me.” The man was rather startled by that and he said, “What do you mean, ‘We shall have the kind of weather that pleases you tomorrow?’” The farmer said, “The weather that pleases God always pleases me.” That is a great picture of meekness and of one who is submissive before God and who receives from God’s hand everything and all things in light of his goodness and trust in Him, whether the weather becomes rainy and cloudy, or sunny and bright, or snowy and cold, or hot and arid, he takes pleasure in what God has for him. If it is a trial, he knows that it is from God’s grace and His good hands. If it is a blessing he receives it with all the more joy.

The best example we have in Scripture of meekness, to help us understand this, is the One who is called “The Most Meek Man Ever To Walk This Earth”. Do you know who he is? His name is Moses and I asked you to turn to Numbers 12. This is an interesting story. It says,

<sup>1</sup> Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.

Miriam and Aaron are Moses’ sister and brother. Moses’ first wife, Zipporah, had died and Moses now takes another wife and she is a Cushite, that is to say that she is from Ethiopia, indicating that she is from another race and she has black skin. Aaron and Miriam, particularly Miriam, are at fault here, and she begins to publically criticize Moses for marrying this Cushite woman. It appears to me, and I believe the story bears this out, that it is entirely racially motivated. Remember God had not yet told the people of Israel not to marry other races so this is entirely appropriate for Moses to do, but they didn’t like it. She was different from them and they began to criticize Moses heavily for his marrying this Ethiopian woman, someone from a different race. This jeopardized Moses’ esteem in the eyes of the people as the leader. It was important for him to hold that, but, also, it was a personal affront and a personal attack.

Let's us step away from the biblical page for a moment and consider what it would be like in our lives if this were true. We had suffered the difficulty of losing a spouse. Then, in joy, we find God providing another spouse, but this spouse is publically and openly subjected to condemnation and criticism and scorn. How would you respond to this if your brother and sister acted this way? What would you do? What did Moses do? Moses acted in meekness. He did not defend himself or his decision. He didn't fight back. In fact, there is not a record that he said a word. He also didn't seem to fret about it and toss and turn at night. He didn't seem to run it through and say, "These guys are really making me mad." What did he do? Let's read the rest of the story,

<sup>2</sup> "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this.

<sup>3</sup> (Now Moses was a very humble [meek] man, more humble [more meek] than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

<sup>4</sup> At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you." So the three of them came out.

Then He speaks to Aaron and Miriam in particular in Verse 6,

<sup>6</sup> he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. <sup>7</sup> But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. <sup>8</sup> With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles... Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

<sup>9</sup> The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.

<sup>10</sup> When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam—leprous, like snow.

Here is the irony of the judgment: she was "leprous, like snow", in other words, He said, "You were so concerned and so critical of Moses marrying the Ethiopian woman with black skin. You like white skin I will give you white skin," and He turned her skin white. But, what did Moses do? Did he say, "Ah, ha, she got what she had coming!" No, look at what Moses did immediately, in Verse 13,

<sup>13</sup> So Moses cried out to the LORD, "O God, please heal her!"

Moses was the meekest man on the face of this earth. Instead of fighting back he did not open his mouth in vindication. In this way he was very much like our Lord Jesus, of whom it was said, in 1 Peter 2,

<sup>22</sup>"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup>When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Meekness is not a stoic resignation to the circumstances of life, but rather it is a passionate pursuit of God's glory. Meekness is not mild, but it is bold and forceful. Remember Moses, who was called the meekest man on earth, was the one who stood before the Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go. This is what God's message is." There is not a lack of boldness. Moses was incredibly humble in regard to God and to God's Truth. He stood before the people with the Law of God and he proclaimed that Law boldly and he held them to that Law, but he was humble to his own elevation and to his own esteem.

True meekness helps us to be bold, active, energetic, and decisive about the right things. That is the meaning of meekness.

We have to ask the question: what does meekness bring to us? Here is the promise that Jesus makes in Matthew 5, when He says,

<sup>5</sup>*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 53:9

Man's philosophy is: assert yourself and claim the earth as your own. This is interesting, because as man applies this strategy to life they end up losing the very world they seek. It is the meek and the gently who inherit. I like the word "inherit" because it does not tell us that the meek "earn" the earth or "wrestle" the earth away from others, but we inherit it because the earth is our Father's. It is God's Himself and we are the Father's sons and daughters through faith in Jesus.

This Father of ours owns all and so all is ours to enjoy.

This is written in the future tense, but there is a present sense that the earth is ours now. This does not mean that we can claim everything as our own stewardship and with our own rights, but what it does mean is that just because the Father parcels out various responsibilities and stewardships to different people, this doesn't mean we cannot enjoy all the earth and be content, so that if someone owns a wonderful, big house, can't we also enjoy and rejoice in that house? While it is true that we don't have the right to paint it the colors that might want to paint, or to rearrange the furniture, can't we look at that house and say, "That is our Father's home! That is the house that our Father owns." We rejoice that others are given that as well.

We inherit the earth because we are our Father's sons and daughters. We are of the same family with God Himself. Certainly there is a future realization when Jesus Christ comes and returns to this world and establishes His own Kingdom. The truth is we do not have to bite and scratch and pull for every advantage in this life. We don't have to pre-occupy our time with protecting our rights or gaining control. The Lord fights our battles and gives us whatever land we possibly need. With food and clothing we are quite content and happy and joyful. The gentle shall inherit the earth.

Someone may say, "All of that is right and wonderful, but the fact is I am not a meek person and I could never make myself a meek person." Friends, you are exactly right – you cannot create within yourself this kind of meekness of which Jesus speaks. This characteristic is not within us and that is the reason why we need Jesus to transform us. Jesus says, in Matthew 11,

*<sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am (meek) and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

He is saying, "What is impossible for you to accomplish in yourself is possible through Me." This is the reason why we need Him.

Christian, please understand that God can transform your life from being one of spiritual passivity to one of spiritual power; from rough, heavy-handedness with others to gentleness and delicate care; from fighting for our position, always discontent to resting in God with great contentment; from defensiveness when we are wronged to delight even under criticism; freedom from bitterness into a forgiving heart. Transforming us from self-will to submission to God – all of these are a part of what it means to be meek.

Let us consider two more applications. First, meekness always listens eagerly to God's Word. This is what meekness does. Turn to James where he uses this term in James 1:19 and following,

*<sup>19</sup>My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup>for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and (meekly) accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

Meekness causes us to listen with eagerness and readiness. James speaks first of a man who is not meek and this man is quick to anger. He is slow to listen. He believes that his own opinions are a wealth of knowledge and wisdom and he little needs to listen to anybody in this world because he already knows what is necessary to know to be a success. So, he is quick to speak to tell others what is truth and what is wise and he is quick to get angry with others disagree with him. He is not eager to listen to what God has to say because he already believes that he possesses the "truth" and his filter for life, as he thinks about ideas and thoughts that flow to him and through him, is simply his own perception and he runs everything through this dirty filter. As a consequence, he only hears and accepts and receives what his own heart and his own mind wishes to accept.



Meekness, on the other hand, makes us eager to receive instructions, for meekness makes us aware that we do not have the Truth that we so desperately need and that God does.

John Piper writes, “This person recognizes the limitations of his knowledge and the fallibility of his thinking, and so is eager to listen and learn anything valuable that he can. If he hears something new or contrary to his own view, his first reaction is not fretful anger. He listens and he considers, and when it comes to God’s Word he receives it with meekness.”

Please understand that it is impossible for us to be meek and argumentative at the same time. We find ourselves getting into many arguments with people over our ideas. Understand that at the root of that is a lack of meekness. This is not to say that we have no convictions or no settled understanding of the Truth that we are willing to stand up for and even to refute other ideas, but it does mean that when our understanding of the Truth comes into connection with other people’s understanding of the Truth, we first want to say, “I want to know what God’s Word has to say because this is where my source lies; not in myself and my own ideas and my own wisdom. I want to know what God says and if the other person’s ideas do not reflect God’s Truth and we do come to talk to them about that, we do so not with an argumentative spirit”, ready to bash the person down with our debating techniques, but we come to them with a gentle spirit and a humble spirit and a spirit wishing to reach out and bring correction.

The second application I give is that meekness esteems others as more important than ourselves. A meek person knows that he is only a man and that he does not even claim to be among the best of men. He doesn’t expect to receive the place of honor. He doesn’t consider himself to be nobler and wiser and more honorable than the rest. He doesn’t look for honor and he is willing to put up with very little recognition. He doesn’t see himself to be a superior being. He doesn’t look to his own talent or intellect or wealth or resources or accomplishments. He doesn’t look to these things and expect that these things will give him praise and honor and glory, for he knows that we, as men and women, are not judged by God by these things, so we take them and say, “We won’t judge others upon these bases. We will not judge ourselves.” A meek person is one who esteems others as more important than themselves. He is a person who gives, a person who is generous, and a person who is loving.

Let me ask you, where are you in your quest for joy? It seems often to be so elusive and here we have one of the eight statements that has been such a challenge to us. Outside of Christ there can be no change or transformation, but inside of Christ all the change that is necessary for us to make is readily available by God’s grace. So, you have found this quest for joy and this quest for satisfaction and happiness to somehow be elusive and you are chasing and chasing, but it seems as though you are running after the wind, as Solomon would describe, or have you come and found yourself a settled satisfaction because, in Christ, God has given you everything?

Friend, I first would encourage you, if you have not yet trusted yourself to Jesus Christ, that today would be the day when you will look up to God and say, “God, I need what Jesus Christ offers. I need to be changed. I am not a meek person and I have come to understand that without meekness I will not merit the earth.” Without that there is no hope and no future. Today could be the day that God would reach you and meet you if you humble yourself before Him. He delights to do that for you.

But, Christian, also please let us consider the measure which Godly characteristics are controlling our lives. One of the fruits of the spirit is meekness and gentleness and if we are not giving evidence of gentleness it is because the flesh is winning a war within our soul and that war that the flesh is winning is robbing us of joy and it is robbing us of blessedness and being connected to God’s very glory. I ask you to hold yourself humble before God and ask God to work in a mighty, mighty way.