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Blessed are the Meek

531-B

Series: The Beatitudes

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Beatitudes, God's "Beautiful Attitudes", are attitudes that result in God's life of self-contained joy. These attitudes ought to permeate our lives, even in weeks that are seemingly disastrous circumstantially. Jesus said,

Oh what bliss for the man or woman who is poor in spirit. His is the kingdom of heaven.

Oh what bliss for the man or woman who learns to mourn. He or she shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:3,4 paraphrased)

We now come to the third of God's reflections of Himself,
Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

(Matthew 5:5)

Our study will be divided into five parts. We will try to cover two completely and a part of the third in this lesson.

- I- The Prerequisites for Meekness
- II- The Priorities of Meekness
- III- The Portrait of Meekness
- IV- The By-products of Meekness
- V- The Pursuit of Meekness.

Before we define meekness or see how much God cares about it, we need to pause long enough to see this statement of our Lord's in context with the progression of the Beatitudes. We are building an edifice, a spiritual building or house, for God to dwell in and control. The foundation stone is poverty of spirit. An understanding of that poverty gives a man the capacity to see his need and have that need met in Jesus Christ. In order to fully understand and comprehend who we are, we used the '55 Chevy illustration. We used the example of a junk heap of a car that was in bad need of repair and really not worth hauling to the junk yard. In the eyes of one who paid all that he had for it and who plans to restore it into something special and beautiful, it becomes something of inestimable value. This is how God views us.

Next, we discussed the concept of making the spiritual switch in terms of understanding poverty of spirit. We are to look at people who are poor by the world's standards regarding physical possessions and draw spiritual conclusions. One conclusion is that of relative insignificance and the other is that of relative expectations. Relative insignificance says that we are entitled, by

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virtue of the fact that we are heirs of God, to everything Jesus has in the spirit realm. We are likewise entitled to everything that Jesus had on earth in the physical realm, which wasn't much.

Relative expectations means that to be poor in spirit we are heirs to the King, but the King has called us to the throne and asked us to take off our robes of royal righteousness and put on the robe of a servant. He then sends us out onto the highways and byways to be a servant of His people. We will see in this lesson how this works more in practice.

THE PREREQUISITES FOR MEEKNESS

When we have understood who we are in Christ and what our relative insignificance is all about, we can begin to understand the principle of mourning. This is the first building block on that foundation stone. Blessed are they that mourn, who learn to express their emotions to the point of weeping properly. We learned that God cried over four things. God cried over the hurts of others. As we have seen victims of natural disasters and man-made disasters, our hearts ought to go out and really hurt as they hurt. We are told to weep over the lost sheep just as Jesus wept over the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We are told to weep over the effects of sin in the world. We are supposed to weep over finding and doing the will of God. These things are to build us to the point that we can learn to weep over our own sins, because we have seen what sin really is and what sin can really do. Having learned to be poor in spirit and learned what it means to mourn, it is only at this point that you and I have the capacity to confront life with God's responses. We can only then learn to deal with people with God's kind of kindness. Then we can begin to become meek.

How meek are you? Take a piece of paper and write down your own personal definition of meekness. If I were to ask you how meek you are, it would be totally insignificant unless we were using a common denominator to define the word. As you are writing down your definition, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. Ask a friend or your spouse to do the same thing for you later. Then we will find out how accurate you are in assessing yourself. On the scale, 10 is being really meek, with 1 being not meek at all. Also, see if you can pick the two meekest men in Scripture.

The phrase, "when the rubber meets the road", is an advertisement for a tire company. It literally means if it doesn't work here, forget it. That is really where we are when we talk about

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meekness. Having a spirit of poverty means we learn who we are from God's perspective. When we learn to mourn, we learn what sin is from God's perspective. Meekness is how we respond with God's life from God's perspective.

Whether or not we have poverty of spirit or a spirit of mourning can at times be hidden. It is hard to hide whether or not we are meek, because this is where the Beatitudes begin to reach out and touch the people around us in a more dominate fashion. How important is it to God that you and I develop spiritually into being meek men and women? It goes without saying that this very concept runs cross-grain to the concepts of the world. The world says that the man or woman who is powerful, self-assertive, self-assured, aggressive and determined to succeed, even at the expense of others, to him belongs success in the world. With this concept in mind the Lord Jesus came to address the crowd and look penetratingly into their eyes and said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The word inherit means it is a gift to the receiver, and he does nothing to get it.

Blessed are the meek. Matthew is writing primarily to the Jews. They were waiting for the kingdom to come. To them, the kingdom was to be materialistic, something that was tangible and earthly that they could touch and see. To them the kingdom was to be militant, something that the power of the Messiah had to come and drive out the enemy and take over. No small wonder that they flinched at a statement such as this, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth". But they should have understood, because for generations, Jehovah had been setting apart and ministering in a specific way to the meek.

You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth
feared and was still,

When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of
the earth. Selah (Psalm 76:8, 9 NKJV)

The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the
ground. (Psalm 147:6 NKJV)

For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the
humble with salvation. (Psalm 149:4 NKJV)

But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide
with equity for the meek of the earth; (God shall balance the
scales for the meek.) (Isaiah 11:4 NKJV)

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has

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anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; 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;
(Isaiah 61:1 NKJV)

It is no wonder that Jesus was building on this platform as He said Matthew 5:5, “*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*”. It should have come as no surprise to the Jews that God had a special place in His heart for the meek.

THE PRIORITIES OF MEEKNESS

What is real meekness? If I were to ask some of you, each one would come up with a slightly different definition. Can we define meekness in a simple, tangible way so that we can actually begin to read the barometer of our own spirits to determine if we really are meek or not? I believe we can. I believe the simple use of a concordance brings meekness into focus in at least two perspectives, a positive and a negative aspect. Together they give us a yardstick to use.

In addition to this, I believe that God Himself specifically gave us two illustrations in Scripture of two men’s lives that He said under any given set of circumstances, can be used as examples of how a meek person acts.

How many of you really think you have a meek attitude? That is not a fair question, because it is like asking you to wear your humility button. Let’s therefore look at a definition of meekness. It has two parts. Meekness is the absence of a hostile, defensive, or retaliatory spirit. In other words, meekness would rather switch than fight, would you? Meekness never defends its own reputation or its own rights. Meekness will flinch when the reputation of God is maligned, but has no banner to wave of its own. Even when oppressed or accused, the Scripture says that meekness is quiet.

Let’s now go to the second part of the definition. Meekness is the absence of a hostile, defensive or retaliatory spirit and therefore, the presence of a quiet, gentleness that accepts without conflict the will of God even in the details of life. In other words, if we were going to boil it down to a concise sentence it would be:

Meekness is the absence of retaliation and the presence of quiet gentleness. One of the root words in the Hebrew literally means to be depressed in mind or circumstances. It means to be able to be walked on without saying, “Ouch!” That is meekness. That is the absence of retaliation. The presence of quiet gentleness we might

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say is to be able to turn right around and do good to the owner of the footprints that walked on us. That is meekness.

There are three things that meekness are not:

1- Meekness is not natural; it is supernatural. You may think that some people are by nature meek. Maybe not. By temperament they may be gentle, but meekness is a supernatural fruit of the Spirit as we see in Galatians 5:22-23. If we recognize it, I think we will realize that the meekest men of all Scripture were the most powerful. One commentary I was reading said it was neither natural nor is it niceness. In other words, you can buy two dogs, one can be nice and the other mean. The nice dog just wags his tail and is basically a sweet, gentle animal. The other one is a mean-spirited dog that is hard to get along with. You can't make a mean dog nice. You can control his responses through training, but you can't change the basic drives in his life and make him meek.

This is not true with the Christian. With the Christian, God, through the Holy Spirit, can take that mean streak and retaliatory, hostile, vindictive spirit in us and turn it into a pure, quiet, gentle meekness. That is God's business and what He is here for. That is what we are here for.

2- Meekness is not weakness, rather it is real strength. Meekness is not cowardice. We sometimes think that people who cringe in the face of reality are meek, but that is not true.

3- Meekness is not programmed behavior. If you go to the clerk at the complaint counter at a department store, you may see a painted on grin and a flashy smile. You approach him and say, "Sir, I want my money back on this item." He may grin and be very nice. You may have no idea what lurks behind that grin. He has been programmed to respond to the customer with courtesy and kindness, or he will be fired. So with that kind of motivation we have programmed meekness, but it is not real meekness. You may have a door to door salesman ring your doorbell and greet you with a nice greeting then give his sales pitch, "Ma'am we would love to show you these encyclopedias. We have 17 free things to give you if you order them." As you begin to answer, your child may have just spilled red Kool-Aid on his suit. He may have a sweet smile on his face as he says, "What a cute child you have," while inside thinking, "I would like to belt that kid in the nose." That is not meekness, it is programmed behavior.

I am going to give you some tests as we go along just to keep it

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practical. The first is a test to determine your freeway meekness. It is hard to fake it there. I can remember that as a newlywed, we went to a movie with a cartoon. I will never forget it, because he was just like me, at least in some ways. The cartoon started with a character resembling Johnny Businessman who got up from the breakfast table, hugged the kids, patted the dog, kissed his wife, went outside, smiled and waved to the neighbors, then got in his car. As he started the car, little horns developed out of his ears. He grabbed hold of the steering wheel as tight as he could. His face turned beet red, and his eyes began to bulge out. He had fire from his lips as he said, "Let's go get'em!" He jammed his car into gear and left his driveway. He proceeded to go through every experience you could while driving a car. His idea was to see how many people he could crowd out, get in front of, get angry with and become aggravated with. He would then arrive at work, get out of his car and paint on his nice smile and become an angel again, because he had gotten all of his hostility out of his system.

I used to drive to work on a freeway here in town that was made for only eight cars. If I left early to go to work, I was fine and didn't run into much traffic. But, if I left late, there would be a lot of traffic. I would be driving along in the stop and go traffic when other cars would enter the freeway and without looking merge into the slower traffic while they were going rather fast. They would not look or slow down, they would enter as if it were their right to do so. It is best that you could not read my mind at that point. I would wait until they got even with my front bumper, then I would sit on the horn. It would scare them to death, and they would run over into the grass on the side. I would think, "Next time, he will be more careful." That is a godly spirit, don't you think, absent of a vindictive or hostile attitude?

Have you ever been driving at night when the driver behind you will not turn off his high beams, and they glare into your rear view mirror? You then slow down enough for him to pass you, and then speed up to get real close to his car, and then turn your high beams on and love every minute of it. I am not the only one. Meekness.

Have you ever had a car get right on your bumper and tailgate you? You look into your rear view mirror, and think that you could see his tonsils. So you pull over to let him pass, then you speed up close behind him to let him see how it feels. What a vengeful, hostile, vindictive spirit we have. How is your freeway meekness? It is a good indicator of what is really in your heart.

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It irritates me when a car gets on the freeway that has a bumper sticker that says, “Honk, if you love Jesus.” About that time he cuts in front of you and almost takes off your front fender. You lay on the horn. He thinks he is being an evangelist, so he waves and smiles real big. Freeway meekness. Does it mean that you assume that the road is yours, and everybody else is an obstacle? Not so. The road is theirs, and you have the privilege, when there is room, to drive along with the other cars. That is meekness.

I am going to give three statements that I think we ought to use when we come to a situation in which there is a temptation to respond with hostility rather than meekness.

1- “Lord, did you see that?” The reason for this one is to acknowledge God’s presence before you get out of hand. “Lord, did you hear that?”

2- “Lord, would you take over?” This is to acknowledge your inability to respond properly apart from Him.

3- Pray. Scripturally, God brings people across your path that would normally, in the flesh create hostility so that you can pray.

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’

But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

(Matthew 5:38, 39 NKJV)

One of the reasons God brings “enemies” into our lives is because that person may need prayer. Perhaps you are driving down the freeway and someone cuts you off. You have no idea why the person was in such a hurry. You know you are in a hurry, because you have a coffee pot waiting for you at work. You have the shakes, and you want some coffee, and that is important to you. Eternity rests on the coffee pot in your mind. The person who is in a rush may have a loved one in the hospital and just received a phone call telling of a grave situation. That person may have had a sleepless night and may be contemplating suicide, and therefore he may be desperate. God may have brought them across your path so that you would be able to pray for them. Don’t use the excuse that you don’t know their name. God does. “Lord, I’d like you to remember that guy in the station wagon who almost took my fender off.”

In the Scriptures we see that the negative aspect of meekness is the presence an attitude of vengeance, defiance or retaliation.

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Barnes in his commentary says, “Meekness is patient in the receiving of injuries. It comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults.” This is the essence of meekness. How does the Scripture reveal this aspect of meekness? In 1 Corinthians Paul says,

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness? (1 Corinthians 4:21 NKJV)

He means, “Do you want me to come in judgment or meekly?”

Brothers, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1, 2 NKJV)

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,

to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. (Titus 3:1, 2 NKJV)

One commentary I read said that this meekness is the quality of God that causes the lion to lay down like a lamb.

THE PORTRAIT OF MEEKNESS

God gave us two guaranteed portraits in Scripture of meekness. The first one is His Son, Jesus Christ. We see this in Matthew 11. One commentary said this is the only place in Scripture where Jesus specifically claimed a quality of character for Himself.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28, 29 NKJV)

He said, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Why? Because He was meek. God isn’t waiting on the edge of His seat to retaliate in response to our sin. God, in meekness, is waiting for us to come to Him all who labor and are heavy laden. His goal is to teach us and give us rest.

The other illustration of meekness that we find in Scripture is a man named Moses. We read in Numbers 12 that Moses was very meek above all the men who were on the face of the earth. He was the meekest man alive at that time.

We know that Jesus said of Himself, “Every time you see Me act, you see meekness.” Meekness then is not the absence of the

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ability to respond, because we saw Jesus' response as He cleansed the temple. We saw Moses when he came down from the mountain and found the people worshipping the golden calf. The difference was on those two occasions the reputation and the character of God was at stake. So on those occasions, these men responded with righteous anger. Apart from these occasions, we will see many times when their own reputation, rights, and possessions were at stake. Neither of them ever fought back. We will then look at Abraham in a similar confrontation and see how he responded. This principle can best be expressed through the study of four passages. We only have time for one in this lesson. Let's turn to Romans 12 to look at the basic principle behind this concept. In this passage, the spiritual gifts and the need for unity in the body have just been discussed. We see a listing of character qualities necessary for the gifts in the body to function. In verse 16, the Holy Spirit writing through the apostle Paul says this,

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

(Romans 12:16-21 NKJV)

Now let's get painfully serious in these closing moments. This is the essence of meekness. It is the absence of a retaliatory spirit with the ability to trust that God, who is in control of the universe, is exactly in control of your life. That area in which you have been wronged or cheated or misunderstood or wrongly accused is God's business. Your business is to respond in quietness and gentleness with the absence of hostility. Whether it be on the freeway, in a store, in our homes, at church, on the street or at work, our response is to be one of meekness. There are some basic principles I want to point out from these verses.

Principle 1- Never repay an injustice with an injustice. We see

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this in verse 17. Nothing that any person could do would justify your retaliation. “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? No,” Jesus said, “I say unto you, love your enemies. Pray for them. Do good unto them.”

Principle 2- Strive to be above reproach with regard to responding to injustice. The slightest flare of your temper while defending your rights destroys your testimony. If it be possible, as much as you can, be at peace with all men. Don't fight. We are not talking about going to war for your country, so don't read that into this verse. We are talking about interpersonal relationships. If it be possible, as much as you can, be at peace with all men. The guy that calls you names, that cuts in front of you on the freeway, live peaceably with him. That is your calling as a Christian.

Principle 3- Your responsibility furthermore is to never be the cause of a quarrel. We are to live peaceably with all men. Don't even be that innocent third party that causes two other parties to be at war with each other.

Principle 4- Never respond with revenge in your heart or assume the responsibility for avenging an injustice. When you do that, you rob God of His ability to be God. Scripture tells us, “Don't avenge yourself, give the problem to Me. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.” It is a quality that belongs to God, because He is a just God. He also has the right, because He is omniscient. He is omnipotent. He alone has the right to dispense revenge. You don't have the right to avenge, because you don't know all the facts. You are not objective. You are not God. That is the reason if your enemy hungers, you give him something to eat and so forth. Never assume the responsibility for avenging an injustice.

Principle 5- Revenge is God's business, not yours.

Principle 6- Your task is to love and serve the ones who maligned you. You ask yourself what good thing can you do for that person? You can pray for them, even if you don't know them. You can smile at them. You can try to reach out and touch their heart. You may be in a store and the clerk waiting on you is rude and vindictive towards you. Your natural response is to want to have them fired or take a swing at them or go to another store.

I had an experience this week when I was the world's worst. We went to a parade and my response was pitiful and down right horrible. We couldn't find our seats and in the light of eternity it isn't going to be very valuable. The policemen we asked couldn't

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help us find our seats. They may have even been the very same policemen who saved my daughter's life on Friday. I was extremely hostile to them and was very wrong. I had the absence of meekness. The very people you are asking to help you in that store or that you meet on the street may have a deep-rooted problem and have the need for love. Scripture indicates that these people have been brought into our path for a reason. That reason may be to pray for them, or do something for them, or to show them love. He said, "Avenge not yourself, tell the Lord about it." We need to remember our three statements: "Lord, did you hear that?", "Lord, you take over.", "Lord, I'll pray." Your task is to love and serve the one who maligned you. Use constructive ways to become the essence of love and ministry to that person.

Principle 7- God's goal is to overcome evil with good. Love your enemies into the kingdom. If they take your coat, give them your shirt. If they ask you to walk with them a mile, walk with them two. The whole concept and essence of meekness is our aim. If you go to the check out counter at the store and someone steps in front of you with 17 items and you have one, and even though you were there first, give them grace. Maybe they have a sick child at home. Maybe they are new here and don't understand the principles. Maybe they are just mean. It doesn't make any difference in light of eternity whether you are two minutes later getting home. Maybe God put them there so that you can say a kind word to them and give them the gospel. Or, do you do what I do, grumble and complain? A vindictive spirit takes over, and it is wrong. That is not meekness. God's goal is to overcome evil with good. What can you do for that person in front of you? You can help them lift the groceries out of the basket. The point is to learn the essence of meekness that is found in Romans 12.

In the next lesson we will study three more passages of Scripture: I Peter 2, Numbers 12 and Genesis 13. In the meantime, study your own life. Look in the mirror of your spirit and find out, in the light of this definition of meekness, just how meek you are. The absence of a spirit of retaliation or vindictiveness and the presence of quiet, gentle kindness will help you evaluate where you are. That is Jesus, and Jesus in us ought to be no less.

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