

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK I

Philippians 2:1-11

INTRO: In these messages we have been looking at the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. We have said that most of these beatitudes speak of the character of the true Christian. The Christian's conduct follows in the rest of chapters 5-7. We have looked at the first two beatitudes, and as I see it, these two speak of what has to happen in a person's character when he becomes converted.

The very first thing that must happen is that we become poor in spirit. This becoming poor in spirit is not something we make happen; it is something that happens to us. And it happens when we get to see ourselves with regard to righteousness and holiness in comparison, not to other people, but the Lord Jesus Christ. Until we come to this point, we cannot get saved. Peter came to this point when he said to Jesus, "Depart from me Oh Lord, for I am a sinful man."

What follows becoming poor in spirit is, mourning. We cannot truly see ourselves in light of Jesus Christ when it comes to righteousness, godliness and holiness, without becoming sorrowful or going into mourning. When we see we are doomed to hell because we are sinners, now we will mourn. But not only do we become poor in spirit and mourn when we get converted, but in the process of sanctification, this will happen again and again. Not that we get saved again and again, but that we grow in our understanding of what we are in comparison to Jesus Christ.

But as I see it, the next beatitude, blessed are the meek, is a beatitude that indicates that something truly beautiful is happening in the believer. To become poor in spirit, and to mourn prepares us for something better; meekness. So it says, "Blessed are the meek..." And again, this is very contrary to the thinking of the world. It is actually the opposite of what the world would call blessed.

Now I might mention here, that before a person becomes poor in spirit and mourns his own condition, he must come into contact with the Word of God in some way. It may be through preaching or some witness or reading the Word of God. The Bible says Faith

comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And then this person must come under conviction of personal sin. It is this that brings about the second beatitude, mourning.

And I would suggest that between mourning and meekness, something else must happen. Repentance must happen. That is a change of mind about sin. One must recognize that one is a sinner and lost and desire to change. But then following repentance, confession of sin must come. That is part of the repentance process. Then one must put one's trust in Christ for salvation because the Lord has said that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And when our sins are forgiven, we are saved. This, I think, is what brings about meekness.

III. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

A. The Character Of The Meek

And so, we come to the third beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth", and this morning we will only look at the character of the meek. No matter how important or unimportant a person is in this world, if he becomes poor in spirit and mourns his own sinfulness, it will result in meekness!

Now when you think of a meek person, what do you think he or she is like? Is he weak? Is he flabby, one who is ever tolerant, or willing to compromise? Is he a peacekeeper, a smooth-it-over kind of person? Will a meek man keep peace at any price? Just what is meekness? What do you think of if you think of a meek preacher? And once again it is important to define. Many years ago I heard this definition of meekness, and I have not been able to improve on it yet. Here it is: *Meekness is not weakness; but controlled power.* A meek man does not have to assert himself. The world admires a man who asserts himself. A self-made man. But a meek man does not have to assert himself. He does not have to show who he is. Lloyd Jones says the meek man is an enigma to this world.

A.W. Tozer once wrote, "The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he

may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto", end quote.

So we must take a look at this meek man. But before we do that, let me mention first that these traits are not meant to be seen as some Christians are poor in spirit, others mourn, and still others are meek. All who become Christians, as I see it, must enter the kingdom by becoming poor in spirit, and mourn over their sin at least to some degree. A child seven years of age cannot mourn over sin like an older person who has lived in all manner of sin. But in later life, such persons too will learn the depth of the depravity of their own heart.

Then, also, no one is born with these characteristics by nature. There are those who have meek characteristics as non believers, but when they get saved, God will seek to work true Christian meekness into them. And third, all Christians are to grow into all of these traits. And as I have mentioned earlier, I believe, along with others, that these beatitudes are progressive in nature. One does not start by becoming meek. One starts by becoming poor in spirit, which leads to mourning, which brings about meekness.

And in meekness, once again we have something totally different than what this world thinks as a blessed state to be in. The man described here would never make it on the ladder of whom the world considers to be a blessed man. Jones says this man is an enigma to the world. He says the thinking here is foreign to the thinking of the world, the Jew of Jesus day, and the modern Church. He says of the Church, "For is there not a rather pathetic tendency to think in terms of fighting the world, and sin, and the things that are opposed to Christ, by means of great organizations? Am I wrong when I suggest that the

controlling and prevailing thought of the Christian Church throughout the world seems to be the very opposite of what is indicated in this text? 'There', they say, 'is the powerful enemy set against us, and here is the divided Christian Church. We must all get together, we must have one huge organization to face that organized enemy. Then we shall make an impact, and then we shall conquer.' But 'Blessed are the meek', not those who trust to their organizing, not those who trust to their own powers and abilities and their own institutions. Rather it is the reverse of that. And that is true, not only here, but in the whole message of the Bible", end quote.

Consider some examples of what he has said from the OT. We have evidence of that in the account of Gideon. The enemy, the Midianites and the Amalekites lay along the valley, Scripture says, like grasshoppers for number. And God had called Gideon, a farmer, to save Israel. But God said, "You have too many people on your side." God knew Israel would become proud if they won with the number of people they had. So God had Gideon test the people and 22,000 went back home and there were 10,000 left. And God said, "That is still too many." And finally, when they were down to 300 God said, as I interpret it, "That is good. If you win now, You will know that it was I, not you that won." And they won. Even the Church wants to fall into the danger of thinking in numbers.

Go to a very interesting command in the book of Deuteronomy (read 17:14-20). There were the principles God set out for His kingdom, and the kings all failed to follow God fully! God's way just does not make sense!

When Zerubabel rebuilt the temple after the 70 year captivity, it was so small and insignificant compared to Solomon's temple that those who had seen the former temple wept for sorrow. And so in Zechariah 4:8-10 the prophet says, "Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish *it*. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things?"

Now, I think writers who see a progression in these beatitudes are right. Poor in spirit comes first. Then comes mourning. It is only after that, that meekness becomes a trait in the Christian. When I realize what I am like in comparison to Jesus Christ, it will take all the wind out of my sails. There will be no more spirit left in me. That is to be poor in spirit. As long as I compare myself to others, I almost always come out on top; that is in my own mind. And when I become poor in spirit, I will mourn. I will not have to try to make myself mourn. It won't be any problem. I will wish I did not have to mourn. I will have seen at least something of the depravity of my own character and I will mourn. And when I mourn, all of a sudden others begin to look better. This is what brings about meekness. This is the blessed state. Until I see this, I am living in a fool's paradise.

So, we have become poor in spirit and we have mourned our own inner depraved state. And now comes meekness. But Jones says he believes that each of these steps becomes increasingly difficult. I would say that one cannot become meek before the other two steps have taken place. And like the other beatitudes, one cannot achieve meekness by determining to become meek. Meekness too, is a by-product.

But we must note one more thing. When we talk about being poor in spirit, we are talking about an inward condition. When we talk about mourning, it is also regarding our inner condition. But when we talk about meekness, now we are talking about how we are in relation to other people. When we assert ourselves it is in relation to other people. But the meek man does not do this. He does not have to. Oh, meekness is no easy thing. There is a direct relation between meekness and humility. A humble man is not self sufficient. He has learned to trust God. I believe that humility precedes meekness. Becoming poor in spirit and mourning over one's inner deficiencies wants to bring about humility. And when we become humble, we become meek.

Let me read this from Tozer again: "The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority.

Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto."

There are a number of other characters in OT that display meekness of character. Probably one of the greatest examples of all time besides the Lord Jesus Christ is Moses. Consider Numbers 12 (read verse 3). I think the KJV, which says Moses was very 'meek' is correct. Both the KJV and NKJV put this verse in brackets. This verse is an interjection into the middle of a subject. Look at verses 1-2 (read). Miriam, Moses' sister has risen in the ranks and is finally showing signs of not being able to put up with having men over her. She seems to want a position too. Note it does not say, "Aaron and Miriam." It says, "Miriam and Aaron." That is because Miriam talked Aaron into this rebellion. We know this because look at verses 4-9 (read). The Lord struck Miriam. She was guilty.

And what was Miriam's problem? Well, look at verse 2 (read). She wanted a position. She is tired of Moses telling them what the Lord said. So, when she could not find fault in Moses' character, she found a complaint against his wife. Most likely Moses' wife was black. She was Ethiopian. That is how these things work. If you can't get at the person's character who stands in your way, find some other way to get at him.

Now, when somebody speaks out against your wife or your wife's background and tramps it in the dirt, that is cause for offense to most. And it is right there that Scripture inserts these words, "Now the man Moses was very humble (or meek), more than all men who were on the face of the earth." There is no indication that Moses responded. He let the Lord fight his battles. That is a meek man. Moses had the power and authority to put Miriam away. But he did not. That is meekness. It is controlled power.

There was a time when Moses' burden became too great. Go to Numbers 11. And Moses said, "Lord, why have You afflicted me like this? Why have You laid this great burden on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them that I should carry them? Where am I to get meat for them? I am not able to bear all this alone. If you treat me like this, kill me, please!" So the Lord told Moses to choose seventy men and the Lord distributed the load between them. Two of the seventy, however, did not come to the tabernacle when they were called. We do not know why. But the Spirit of God came on them too and they prophesied. So Joshua and another choice man were jealous for Moses' sake that these men prophesied and asked Moses to stop them. Now look at verse 29 (read). Moses was a meek man.

Now I found it very interesting that the word to be 'meek', and to be 'humble' are very closely related. The word meek is *anawv* and the word humble is *awnaw*. And you might find this as amazing as I did. The word usually translated 'humble' is more often translated 'afflicted' in the OT. Look at Numbers 11:11 (read). The word translated 'afflicted' is the same word elsewhere translated 'humble'. I think here is a huge lesson. How does one become meek? By affliction! By humbling!

The word 'meek' according to Jones, is the opposite of self pity. May I ask you, do you know what self pity is? You see, before I am meek, when people say negative things about me, I hurt. There is self pity. When one is meek, one knows that they don't even know the half of one's inner problems. Self pity is a horrible thing. It was a great discovery to me that when I felt feelings of hurt, that I must stop it right there and say, 'Here is the real me. This is wrong. Get rid of this feeling and overcome right here. This is the flesh.' And many times I have had to pray at those times to overcome hurt feelings.

Think of Abraham. Abraham had taken his nephew Lot with him when he left Ur of the Chaldees. And as they traveled, their herds expanded until it become too much to remain together. And Abraham had the right and the authority to

tell Lot where he would have to go (Gen. 13:1-11). Abraham could have said, "Lot, it was by my goodness that I let you come along, and since our herds are too big to stay together, you go to that barren land over there." But instead he let Lot choose, and of all the audacity, Lot chose the well watered land. It led to his downfall, but Abraham prospered. Such are the ways of God. Such are the ways of meek men.

Then think of David. Saul had pursued him and persecuted him and had tried to kill him times without number. And David ran and hid and suffered because of this demonized man. And then one day the Lord delivered Saul into David's hand. David and his men had hidden in a cave when Saul came near to finding him. And Saul came to relieve himself in the cave. And David's men said, "Take him, Take him." And David would not stretch his hand out against the Lord's anointed when he had it in his power to do so.

Jones says the meek man is not sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests or always defending himself. Let me quote what he says, "To be truly meek means we no longer protect ourselves, because we see there is nothing worth defending. So we are not on the defensive; all that is gone. The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. He never talks to himself and says, 'You are having a hard time, how unkind these people are not to understand you'. He never thinks: 'How wonderful I really am, if only other people gave me a chance.' Self-pity. What hours and years we waste in this. But the man who has become meek has finished with all that. To be meek, in other words, means that you have finished with yourself altogether, and you come to see you have no rights or deserts at all. You come to realize that nobody can harm you... When a man truly sees himself, he knows nobody can say anything about him that is too bad. You need not worry about what men say or do; you know you deserve it all and more", end quote.

Let us consider meekness now in the NT. Jesus tried to drive home to His disciples the difference between the

principles of this world and those of His kingdom. He sought again and again to get through to His disciples, and for all that, they did not understand until after He was crucified and resurrected. And when one considers the life of Christ, and what He did to set up His kingdom, one would never think it would work. Jesus never wrote a book. He never built great buildings. He never married in order to leave a family member to carry on His work. He never did what one would expect from one who is to become the ruler of all. As a matter of fact, He allowed Himself to be killed! Such are the principles of the kingdom.

So, as I see it, those who first become poor in spirit and mourn are those who enter the Christian life by repenting and confessing their sins and receiving Christ as their personal Savior. Becoming truly poor in spirit and truly mourning one's sinful condition leads one into the kingdom when repentance and faith take place.

And now, once one is a Christian, God seeks to go about to bring us to the point where we become meek. It is Christians who need to become meek. Consider this in the disciples. Jesus and His disciples had been walking towards Capernaum. I suppose Jesus was up ahead, and the disciples followed. They were talking about the coming kingdom that Christ would set up and they were discussing which of them would be the greatest. There you have the exact opposite of meekness. There you have the attitude of the world, and many Christians.

Turn to Mark 9 (read 30-37). The principles of the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world are so different that it is very hard for us to get it. We can hardly get these concepts into our minds. Now note verse 35 (read). Only Mark gives us this important piece of information. Jesus said, "If any man desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Now one must read this carefully. It might seem that Jesus is saying that if one desires to be first, what will happen is God will make him last. And God will make him to become a servant to all because of his desire to be first. It might seem that the Lord disapproves of the desire to

be great. But I do not think that is what is meant here. What Jesus is saying is not that desiring to be great or first is necessarily wrong. What is wrong is how we go about seeking it. The Christian's problem is that he wants to become great using the principles of the world. Here is how I think this verse is meant, "If anyone desires to be first, here are the principles of becoming first. Let him become willing to be last, and let him become willing to be a servant to all. That is how you become great."

You see, Jesus then took a little child and said, "Whoever receives one of these little children in my name, receives Me." That is the principle. By doing the smallest of ministries, one becomes great in the kingdom. Jesus said in Mark 9:41 that if someone gives a drink of water to another in Jesus' name, he will in no way lose his reward.

Go to Matthew 20. In verses 17-20, as they are going to Jerusalem where Jesus will be crucified not many days from now, He tells them plainly that He must die and be raised again. But their minds are not on Jesus' death. Almost a dozen times He told them in the past short while that He must die, but it is as if they could not hear. And now, when Jesus recognizes what will happen when they get to Jerusalem, some of his disciples are still concerned about who will have what position in the kingdom. Look at verses 20-24 (read).

Then in verse 25, Jesus sets out the principles that govern in the kingdoms of this world (read). This is how the disciples were still thinking. And this thinking is what Jesus has been trying to change. Then in verses 26-28, we have the principles of the kingdom of heaven (read). Jesus said that whoever desires to be great, and He does not say that it is bad to desire that, but He tells them how to become great. One who wants to be great must learn how to serve others. He needs to learn how to be a slave to others. And then He tells them that that is exactly how He has operated while He was on earth. He came to serve, not to be served. Such are the principles of the kingdom.

-The greatest example of meekness is to be found in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. While He was alive on earth, Jesus Himself invited people to come to Him, because, He said, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Let me give you one of the greatest examples of meekness in the life of the Lord while He was on earth. It happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas had come with his band of soldiers. Let us read the account in John 18 (read 1-6).

Go to Matthew 26 (read 51-53). The Online Bible says, and I quote, "...a legion, a body of soldiers whose number differed at different times, and in the time of Augustus seems to have consisted of 6826 men (i.e. 6100 foot soldiers, and 726 horsemen)." Twelve legion would then be, Seven hundred and thirty two thousand soldiers and 8,712 horsemen. And Jesus said He could call on more than that! So the song writer says He could have called ten thousand angels. He had the wherewithal to do whatever He wanted to do with them. But His power was under His control. That is meekness.

-And when He lived on earth, He exemplified the principles of the kingdom of heaven. He lived a meek life. He said Himself, "I am meek and lowly of heart." He was not boasting. He was proclaiming the principles of the kingdom of heaven. The King of the kingdom lived the principles of the kingdom. Isaiah 53:7, a prophecy of Christ, says, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." Before meekness arrives in full, we must learn to keep our mouth shut.

-He said in another place, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom was of this world, then My servants would fight" (John 18:36). But like the disciples, we have a hard time understanding the principles of the kingdom.

Go to Philippians 2 (read 5-8). The song writer says, "He left the splendor of heaven, knowing His destiny." That destiny was the lonely hill of Golgotha. When Jesus came to earth, He laid aside His heavenly glory and made Himself of no reputation. People did not pay attention to

Him, and He was the Creator of the universe! You see, He took on the form of a servant, or better, the form of a slave. He came in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. This was reserved for the worst of criminals. Oh, blessed meekness! But how hardly do we become meek!

Let me change a little rhyme you may be familiar with and read it like this: "Meekness is a virtue, get it if you can; seldom found in women, never found in men." Oh how greatly men struggle with meekness. But it is also a great virtue for women. Listen to 1 Peter 3:3-4, as he instructs women. He writes, "Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle (or meek) and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." This word the NKJV translates as 'gentle', is the word we have in our beatitude. It is meekness.

Let me give Tozer's definition of meekness, changing the word man to woman. "The meek woman is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of her own inferiority. Rather she may be in her moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but she has stopped being fooled about herself. She has accepted God's estimate of her own life. She knows she is as weak and helpless as God declared her to be, but paradoxically, she knows at the same time that she is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In herself, nothing; in God, everything. That is her motto."

(End here?) Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm. That means it speaks prophetically of Christ. It begins like this, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me!" You will be familiar with that because those are the words Jesus quoted when He hung on the cross. Verse 6 says, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn..." That too, speaks of Christ.

It is when we become worms, that we are truly meek. Somewhere in the writings of LEM he says something like

this: "God could mow a mountain with a worm, if He could get all the wiggle out of the worm." That is what someone has called 'worm theology', and most of us don't like worm theology. Let me put that like this: "God could win Canada to Christ through a very insignificant preacher; if He could but get all the pride out of that man, and get in true meekness." When pride is gone and meekness has settled in, God has got the wiggle out of us. And God can do very big things through Christians who have become truly meek.

CONCL: Well, let us conclude. We have considered Jesus words, "Blessed are the meek..." Some years ago I gave you a little reading which I called "Seven Evidences Of The Crucified Life." When my wife and I were ministering in the Philippines, I had to, on short notice, write a message commemorating Jesus' resurrection. And so I renamed those seven evidences as "Seven Evidences Of The Resurrected Life." The crucified life, is the resurrected life. And as I worked on this message, I saw that the crucified life, or the resurrected life could well be called 'The Meek Life'.

1. When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight but your heart is content and restful in Christ, THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

2. "When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient loving silence," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

3. "When you lovingly and politely bear any disorder, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, or any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility...and endure it as JESUS endured it," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

4. "When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, and interruption by the will of GOD," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

5. "When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

6. "When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question GOD, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstance," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

7. "When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE MEEK LIFE.

Is it not appropriate that those who have become poor in spirit, and have mourned their sinfulness and have repented of their sins by confessing them and have received Christ; have been co crucified and co resurrected with Christ, that they are the meek? Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.