

## **Blessed Are the Meek**

In week three of this study through the Beatitudes, we will focus on “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5), and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Of all the beatitudes, one of the most difficult for most people to conceptualize is “blessed are the meek.” While people often equate meekness with weakness, or “the meek” as referring to people who let others walk all over them, that is not the attitude and quality that Jesus is describing here.

To better understand what Jesus is teaching, it is helpful to look at the trait in connection with the promise given after. The attached promises are not random, but Jesus chose them intentionally. When Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth,” it is a contrast to the worldly worldview. The worldly version of this beatitude might read, “Blessed are the strong, for they will take control of the world.” Or maybe, “Blessed are the assertive, those who fight for what they want, for they will get their way.” Those who regard themselves as powerful aren’t waiting to inherit anything, they are looking to take, by force if necessary, whatever they want.

But Jesus taught, “Blessed are the meek, for they will INHERIT the earth” (emphasis added). An inheritance is something that generally needs to be waited for. An inheritance is not earned, but it is given to you by the will of another. A possible definition for the meekness Jesus is referring to is patient endurance. In this case, being meek requires great strength and self-control.

To illustrate these two beatitudes, we will be looking to the example of the life of Joseph (see Genesis 37,39-50). When I look at the entire life of Joseph, I see a great example of meekness – even in his youth. I bristle when I hear young Joseph portrayed as a smug, arrogant youth who had to learn meekness and humility through the series of unfair events in his life. The reason I react strongly against this picture of Joseph is because it is often used by those who try to convince Christians to keep their faith quiet and to themselves. Those who hold such a view will also often misrepresent what Jesus means when He says that we should also be peacemakers.

The misrepresentation of Joseph starts with the presumption that Joseph was being arrogant when he told his dream to his brothers and father. But what were those dreams? They were not his own dreams, but they were dreams given to him by the Lord. Those dreams were the Word of God, and if anyone should’ve respected and understood their importance it should’ve been Jacob. Yet, Jacob rebuked Joseph (Genesis 37:10) instead of rebuking his other sons for their jealousy and envy in mocking the promises God had given to Joseph.

If Joseph truly was arrogant, upon receiving such a dream he would have tried to force this dream to come true. He would’ve demanded that his family start showing him the proper respect immediately. Instead, in meekness, Joseph continued to live in humble obedience to his father. Joseph was even performing the task of a servant by going on a journey to check on the well-being of his brothers when they carried out their evil plan against him. Even though God had given him a promise of future leadership, Joseph always lived with the attitude and humility of a servant.

Throughout the remainder of Joseph's life, this same pattern was repeated. In every situation Joseph found himself in, whether good or bad, he continued to proclaim the truth God revealed to him, lived a life of humble integrity, and gave all the glory for his successes to God. He spoke the truth when it was well-received and when it was unpopular. It would've been easy for Joseph to grow bitter and to try to take the life he felt he deserved. Instead, he waited patiently on the Lord to fulfill His promises in His own way and time.

Years later, when Joseph found himself in a position of power, second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, with the lives of his father and brothers in his hands, Joseph continued to live in meekness. Forsaking revenge, he chose to be a peacemaker. But to bring peace, Joseph knew the truth must be revealed. True peace can only come through repentance, and repentance can only come when the light of God's truth is allowed to shine in the darkness.

Today, we Christians need to be willing to live in the footsteps of Joseph. We need to live meek lives of patient endurance by being willing to share the truth of God's Word without shame and fear. When this world reacts in anger and jealousy, we need to remain bold. We need also to live our lives with integrity. When things don't go our way, we shouldn't lash out in anger and bitterness. We also shouldn't grow silent in despair or fear. We must always continue to do the work God has called us to – boldly proclaiming His truth and allowing God to fulfill His promises to us in His way at His time. In meekness, we need to always live as servants of God's Truth.

Only when we do this, can God use us to be true peacemakers. For the beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God," is also misapplied by those who think that being a peacemaker means compromising the truth for the sake of getting along with others. No, being a peacemaker requires us to stand firm on the truth and expose lies and deceit. Joseph was not able to be reconciled to his brothers until the truth was known. They needed to reveal to him their true hearts, and he needed to reveal to them his true identity. Only after both sides were willing to deal with each other in truth was peace possible.

In Revelation 21 we see the fulfillment of the promises given in these two beatitudes. After John receives a vision of the New Jerusalem coming down to earth from Heaven, the One seated on the throne declares in verse 7, "Those who are victorious will *inherit* all this, and I will be their God and they will be *my children*" (emphasis added). In the judgment that immediately follows, it is interesting to note that the first ones that are said to be thrown into the lake of fire are the cowardly. To live as God's obedient children requires great strength and courage.

In a time when this world is in desperate need to hear the truth, we are pressured more and more to remain silent and to go along with deceitful and destructive lies. Sadly, we often see those who call themselves Christians pressuring other Christians to comply under a pretext of love and peace. But in the name of both love and peace, we must, with meekness, refuse to compromise the truth of God's Word. As servants of the Lord, we must stand firm in the confidence and assurance that one day, in God's time, the meek will inherit the earth. On that day, those who sought peace through the truth will be revealed to be the true children of God.