

## **“Kingdom Character: The Beatitudes” (part 4)**

Matthew 5:5

David DiSalvo is a published author and frequent writer for Forbes magazine. In August of 2012, he wrote an article in Forbes that was entitled, “Why Jerks Get Ahead.” In the article, he said:

*“Overconfident people are perceived as having more social status, and social status is golden...And so it is with rudeness, because while most of us deplore it, research suggests that we also see it as a sign of power.”*

In the article, he referenced a study that was published in the journal of “Social, Psychological, and Personality Science.” The study indicated that the ruder someone acts, the more convinced observers become that he or she is powerful, and therefore does not have to respect the same rules everyone else abides by.

Thus, most people believe that getting ahead involves stepping over everybody else in the process.

Joel A. Garfinkle, in his book, “Getting Ahead,” argues that the key to taking your career to the next level is all about perception, visibility, and influence. He says the following three steps are required:

- Actively promote yourself as an asset and valuable person inside the organization
- Increase your visibility to gain others recognition and appreciation of your gifts
- Become a person of influence who makes key decisions

All of this pretty much sums up the way that the world thinks success is achieved. When we come to the Beatitudes, we see just how much at odds the followers of Jesus are with the world and its system. According to Jesus, everything we have been told about getting ahead in this world is wrong.

- The world says believe in yourself; Jesus says believe in Me
- The world says strive to be number one; Jesus says the last shall be first and the first shall be last
- The world says assert yourself; Jesus says deny yourself

- The world says life is all about you; Jesus says those who lose their life for My sake find it, and those who find it lose it
- The world says get ahead; Jesus says it is no profit to gain the whole world and lose your soul

Such is the subject matter of the Sermon on the Mount. It does not reveal the character that God expects in order for us to be accepted by Him. That would negate the work of Christ on our behalf. The Sermon on the Mount reveals the character He expects from His own because they have already been accepted.

**David Platt** - *“We are not accepted by God because of anything we do. We are accepted by God completely and totally because of a perfect Savior who has died a bloody death in our place and who has risen again in victory. Yes, we pray for our enemies, we love those who persecute us, and we follow the Golden Rule. But we do these things not in order to earn acceptance before our God, but because we have acceptance by God and we want to glorify Him in everything we do.”*

Jesus is not teaching mere moralism here. Moralism is religion without the cross. Instead, He is teaching what the subjects of His kingdom look like once they have been changed by the gospel of His death and resurrection. It is His work in their hearts showing up through their lives.

When Jesus stepped onto the scene, His teaching was unlike anything that people had ever heard before. In a way that was completely contrary to the world, Jesus said that in His kingdom:

- Last is first
- Giving is receiving
- Dying is living
- Losing is finding
- Weakness is strength
- Poor is rich

This is paradoxical truth. G.K. Chesterson once said that a paradox in Scripture is truth standing on its head trying to get our attention.

In a paradoxical way, the attitude of meekness is taken up by Jesus here in this third Beatitude. Jesus says that the one who is meek, of all people, is the one who inherits the earth.

This should cause real surprise because it is so completely and entirely opposed to the way the world around us thinks. The world thinks in terms of strength and power, of ability, self-assurance, and aggressiveness, not meekness.

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** - *“We are reminded at the very beginning that the Christian is altogether different from the world. It is a difference in quality, an essential difference. He is a new man, a new creation; he belongs to an entirely different kingdom. And not only is the world unlike him; it cannot possibly understand him. He is an enigma to the world. And if you and I are not, in this primary sense, problems and enigmas to the non-Christians around us, then this tells us a great deal about our profession of the Christian faith.”*

Life and success in Christ's kingdom is altogether different than the world's definition. Meekness is definitely not a character trait that the world upholds as being essential for getting ahead in life. Yet Jesus says that the meek are the only ones who truly get ahead.

What does it mean to be meek?

### **1. Meekness is STRENGTH under control**

Meekness must never be misunderstood as weakness. To be meek does not mean that one is timid or shy or without a backbone.

**“Meek”** - *carries the basic meaning of being mild; was sometimes used to describe a soothing medicine or gentle breeze; used to describe animals whose naturally wild spirits were broken by a trainer so that they could do useful work*

This is the result of poverty of spirit and brokenness before God.

The basic difference between being poor in spirit and being meek is that while poverty of spirit focuses on our sinfulness, meekness focuses on God's holiness. We take an honest look at ourselves and the result is poverty of spirit; we take an honest look at God and the result is meekness.

When we are poor in spirit, we turn away from ourselves as we are confronted by our own sin. When we are meek, we turn to God and realize we are in need of His righteousness.

Meekness is bringing my life under God's control which manifests itself in self-control.

This is seen in the life of Moses:

**Numbers 12:3 - “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”**

**“Meek”** - *the Hebrew word literally means to be bowed*

It is the idea that Moses lived a life that was constantly ‘bowed’ before God in humble obedience. He was a God-controlled, Spirit-led man who did not march to the beat of his own drum.

Moses was meek, but he was not weak. He boldly stood for what was right even when it was unpopular.

This is seen in the life of Jesus:

**Matthew 11:28-30 - “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 meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

Jesus displayed meekness in His life as He was always in perfect alignment with the will of God the Father.

Jesus was meek, but He was not weak. He boldly confronted those who bought and sold in the temple to make a profit for themselves and called them ‘thieves’ for doing so.

**Galatians 5:22-23 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”**

**“Gentleness”** - *same root word as ‘meek’*

Meekness is a work of God’s Spirit in the heart which is then demonstrated outwardly in one’s life. It is closely tied to self-control.

**Proverbs 25:28 - “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.”**

**A.W. Tozer** - *“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.”*

## **2. Meekness is SATISFACTION in God**

Unlike the other Beatitudes, it would seem that Jesus is quoting directly from the Old Testament here in this verse.

David described those who are meek in Psalm 37:

**Psalm 37:11 - “But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”**

In the first ten verses or so of the psalm, David describes the character of the man or woman who is meek. There is an obvious parallel in the verse with verse 9 which says the one who “waits” on the Lord shall inherit the earth. So, meekness is the same thing as waiting on the Lord or being satisfied in the Lord.

The meek trust in the Lord.

**v. 3 - “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.**

The meek delight themselves in the Lord.

**v. 4 - “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”**

The meek commit their ways to the Lord.

**v. 5 - “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”**

The meek rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.

**v. 7 - “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.”**

So, when Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” He is referring to those who are described by the psalmist as finding their satisfaction in God. It means that God and His rule is at the center of their thoughts.

## **3. Meekness is STILLNESS in the midst of pressure**

In Psalm 37, the psalmist says no less than three times, “Do not fret. It means, “Don’t let your confidence be shaken!”

Those who are meek remain still and confident in the midst of life's pressures. They don't fret themselves over evildoers. They are not envious of evil men. They don't fret because of the one who seems to be prospering in his wicked way.

Instead, their life is characterized by trust in God:

- They look to His sovereignty when facing difficult situations
- They rely on His grace when facing depriving circumstances
- They trust in His providence when facing unknown outcomes

#### **4. Meekness is SUBMISSIVE to God's Word**

Not only is meekness strength under control, satisfaction in God, and stillness in the midst of pressure. Meekness is demonstrated by submissiveness to God's Word.

How so?

Through receiving God's Word by faith:

**James 1:21 - "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."**

Through reaching others for Christ:

**1 Peter 3:15 - "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."**

Meekness is an essential attitude for sharing the gospel with the lost. It is not arrogant or self-righteous. It is possessing a Christ-like spirit.

#### **5. Meekness is SELFLESS in its dealings with others**

Meekness goes out of its way for others. It does not promote or parade self in any way, shape, or form. It is the attitude that binds the church together in unity and strength.

**Ephesians 4:1-3 - "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."**

**D.A. Carson** - *“Individually, each man tends to assume, without thinking, that he is at the center of the universe; therefore he relates poorly to the four billion others who are laboring under a similar delusion.”*

Meekness is the attitude that seeks to restore fallen brothers and sisters rather than throwing stones:

**Galatians 6:1** - **“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you also are tempted.”**

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** - *“The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do.”*