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THEME: What does it mean to be meek, in a Biblical sense?

NOTES: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5 through 7 provides us with solid, practical guidelines for Christian living. It is one of the most widely quoted sections of Scripture, but it also is one of the most widely misunderstood or misapplied sections as well.

One particularly misunderstood section of the Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5:5, where Jesus promised: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Perhaps the biggest stumbling block to clearly understanding what Jesus meant has to do with this word: "Meek."

BLESSED: Before we get to defining "Meek," let's define the word "Blessed." "Blessed" is how we translate the Greek word *Makarios*. It means happy, fortunate and blissful.

There is something important to realize about applying this word. The kind of happiness, blissfulness or contentment Jesus is speaking of is the kind that cannot be found in external things. True blessedness, true happiness is within our hearts and is not affected by the circumstances of life. It is inward and not dependent on outward circumstances.

COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF MEEKNESS: What sort of images appear in your mind when you hear the word "Meek?" Gentle, mild-mannered, soft-spoken, perhaps weak and easily intimidated. Although we can appreciate gentleness and being mild-mannered and soft-spoken as good qualities, the prevailing understanding of what meekness means to us, with its qualities of being weak, self-deprecating and totally unassertive, would not be considered very virtuous. And we would find it hard to imagine that such a person would inherit anything, let alone the earth.

BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF MEEKNESS: The Greek word used for Meek in Matthew 5:5 means soft, or mild. So the word used in Scripture comes close to meaning pretty much what it most of us would think it means.

BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MEEKNESS: Meekness, as portrayed in Scripture does not connote weakness. The word meekness was used quite frequently to refer to the breaking of an animal. Meekness, properly understood, is not characterized by cowardice or lack of conviction, nor niceness. But it is defined by courage, strength and conviction. It does not mean weakness, but rather power put

under control, power completely surrendered to God's control. True meekness causes us to be humble before God, and bold before men.

EXAMPLE OF MOSES: Numbers 12:3 tells us something that, although confusing at first, will help us immensely in understanding what the Bible means by the word "Meek."

Numbers 12:3 tells us that Moses "was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth."

When we take a moment to consider what we know of Moses, he doesn't seem to fit the definition of "Meek" at all. For example Exodus 32 relates of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai after having received the ten commandments from God. He found the Israelites had made a golden calf and were worshiping it. Verses 19 & 20 tell us that he was very angry and he took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

Considering this, could it be that God has a different perspective on meekness than we do?

The story surrounding Numbers 12:3 helps us to understand Biblical meekness better. Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses, were jealous of him and the fact that God spoke through him and not them. They felt they were just as good as Moses. Because of this, God was angry with them, and called all three of them together. God said something very interesting about Moses that obviously was not true of Miriam and Aaron. He said that Moses "Is faithful in all my house."

Unlike his brother and sister, Moses was not interested in his own glory. He neither sought position nor power. But his heart was to serve God and work for His glory. Numbers 12:3, where Moses is referred to as the meekest man of his time, is actually an aside to this story.

Being meek does mean to be gentle and humble, but not toward men, it means to be gentle and humble toward God. This is the meekness that God desires and this is the meekness that Jesus called blessed with the promise of an inheritance.

EXAMPLE OF DAVID: David had been anointed King of Israel to succeed King Saul. This happened before Saul had died. When Saul heard of this, he chased after David to eliminate him. Twice, while on the run, David had the opportunity to kill Saul, and both times he refused. Although he had been promised the throne, he submitted himself to God's timing and would not lift his hand against King Saul, whom he called "God's anointed," allowing God to remove Saul Himself at the time and place He determined, even though it would have meant an end to his plight.

EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH: The final chapters of the book of Genesis tell of the story

of Joseph. Joseph's ten brothers were jealous of him and had sold him into slavery. That act led Joseph on a thirteen year journey which would take him from being a slave to the second most powerful person in the land of Egypt. It was when he held this position that Joseph found himself in a position to punish his brothers for their wicked act against him.

But Joseph did not use his position to exact vengeance. He overlooked the personal offense, because he understood that even though his brothers intended evil, God meant it for good. God had intended to send Joseph ahead of his family to Egypt to save them.

Joseph sought God's glory, not his own. He concerned himself with God's purposes over his own. He desired justice and not vengeance.

EXAMPLE OF JESUS: Jesus displayed incredible meekness in the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of His betrayal. When the soldiers laid hands on Jesus to take Him away, His disciple, Peter, took out his sword to defend Jesus, but Jesus told him to put it back in its sheath, saying, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

Jesus had the power to deliver Himself from the brutal and painful scourging and crucifixion He knew awaited Him, but refused to exercise it because He knew that God's glory and God's plan of salvation depended upon the cross.

CONCLUSION: If we are humble before God, we are not motivated by our own glory, not seeking our own ends, and not viewing life through the lens of how it affects or benefits us. We stand humble before God, meek and mild, and fully submitted to Him. Then, when He send us out into the world, we can be bold for His glory with a heart that desires the advancement of His kingdom.

RESOURCES: John MacAurhtur's New Testament Commentary; R.C. Sproul's "Essential Truths of the Christian Faith."