

MEEKNESS: HOW CHRISTIANS FIGHT BACK

1 Samuel 24:1-7; Matthews 5:1-12

Rev. John Park

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” What does it mean? Do you actually know that this is not a new teaching, but it already appears in one of the Psalms (*Read Additional Reading for details*). In the Old Testament, meekness is a moral quality of gentleness and humility shown by those who are in poverty or affliction and accompanied by their faith in God.

This is a common theme in the Old Testament. But, it wasn't a popular teaching and it was certainly not practiced in people's lives at the time. As Jesus points out in the Beatitudes, we have seen in the Old Testament numerous occasions of how righteous people and prophets were persecuted and murdered. Then, Jesus came and demonstrated this quality through his very own life. Jesus himself says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29, KJV). Hebrews urges us to look “to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus strongly demonstrated his meekness in the time of shame and affliction out of his reverence of his Father's will and God vindicated him through raising him from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. And the Bible, both the Old Testament and New Testament, continuously challenges us to embrace this moral quality in the times of suffering and affliction.

This character of meekness is not easily achievable. And yet, the Bible seems to continuously argue that the people of God ought to demonstrate this character in the circumstances of suffering and affliction. In today's reading, David's faith was put into test and his faith was to be proven through this character of meekness.

I guess Saul felt too good about how his day was going (*Read Additional Reading*) that he became a little careless when he went to “relieve himself” (another way of saying going to washroom). Now, did he imagine that the cave he went to might happen to be where David and his army were camping to hide from Saul? Of course not.

David's men thought this was a divine opportunity. They said, “Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you’” (verse 4). Look, David! What is the chance of having your enemy walk into your hiding cave alone? It must be the Lord working to help you. Take advantage of this while you can!

“Then, David went stealthily behind him, and to everyone's surprise he cut off a corner of Saul's cloak but did not take his life. “He said to his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord's anointed.’ So David

scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way.” (verses 6-7).

What’s incredible is that David saw this opportunity differently. He did not see this as a God-given opportunity to change the status of his flight; rather, he saw this as a temptation in which he could perform something that God would forbid. In David’s circumstance, where his life was on the edge of a cliff, don’t we easily read circumstances around us in favour of our needs and wants? I mean, after all, wasn’t Saul the very one who went insane, trying to kill David for no good reason? Yet, to David, how he appears before the Lord is more important than anything else, perhaps even his own life. He would not justify any unrighteous actions even if it was for a just cause. People of God, what a difference we will see in the church and the world when Christians and churches learn to perceive what seems to be an opportunity to us as a possible temptation and care more about how we appear before our Lord. You see, the character of meekness is exposed, not in good times, but rather in bad times, when it seems to make sense to us to compromise; then, we justify it by saying it’s a God-given opportunity. When ninety-nine men say, “Thank you Lord!” this man of God ceases this opportunity and willingly risks his own life and the lives of many for his trust in the Lord. Jesus says, “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (Mark 8:35).

Now, what can we learn from it? This story shows how David’s meekness has proven him to be a right heir of the kingdom of Israel. What Samuel prophesied about God giving the kingdom of Israel to somebody who is better than Saul (c.f. 1 Samuel 15:28) was fulfilled, not by David laying his hands on Saul in revenge, but by being meek and fearing the Lord in all circumstances, even in the time when everyone believed it was a God-given opportunity. He chose to be patient and endure what was given to him, and in fact this was the only way he could truly receive the kingdom of Israel; otherwise God would have found somebody better than David, because God wanted to put a king who could truly rule his kingdom with meekness and humility.

In fact, this is how we Christians inherit the earth. Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” God wants to use us as his stewards, so that we may use our resources and influence to impact other people in a way that brings honour and glory to God, and he gives these privileges, not to everyone, but to those who can use them for right reason in God-honouring ways. Through tests and trials, the Lord wants to see what we are truly made of, and it’s our meekness that God blesses and entrusts us with the people around us (Read *Additional Reading*).

I recently met a Christian who is in the construction business and we became close. In my conversation with him, I learned that he was a man of God with this character of meekness. Allow me to share his story: “Last year was a year of trials and testings, but even more so it was a year of eternal blessings from God. In the Spring, I met with a couple to settle accounts for a major renovation that we had completed for them. They offered a payment which was \$34,000 less than the outstanding balance. They said it was all that they could afford to pay. So I accepted what they told me as the truth. I then had the opportunity to pray for them and I blessed them, their family, and their home.

In November, I met with another customer, to settle the outstanding balance for a very large renovation which we had completed for them. He offered a final payment of \$74,000 less than the outstanding balance! I decided to accept his offer and put the payment toward my outstanding credit card balances.

My daily life is a living testimony of God working in my life. God is my Provider, I choose to trust in Him rather than in men. In both cases, I had opportunity to share God's Word, and His encouragement.

In the second case, the customer's son (who was about 30 years old) was beginning a new walk with the Lord. During the renovation I would often share with him what God had taught me that day, from studying His Word. One Sunday morning, I was driving out of the parking lot at church. A car pulled into a parking space in front of me. It was this same young man. So I pulled into the parking space next to him, to say hello.

We spoke briefly, then he invited me to sit in the passenger seat of his car. I knew that this was a Divine appointment, because a couple of minutes earlier or later and I would have missed this meeting. He had many questions, and for the next two hours we shared God's Word together.

We discussed Hebrews 12. It exhorts to us: "Run with perseverance the race marked out for us, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and now sits at the right hand of the Throne of God." Likewise we are encouraged to endure hardship as discipline because the Lord disciplines those he loves. Hebrews 13 :5 quotes God's promise recorded by Moses "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" Then in James 1, we read: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds... Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the Crown of Life that God has promised to those who love Him."

I thanked God, for this divine appointment and for the opportunity to be His witness during the renovation in their home."

People of God, can you exhibit this same character? Can you learn to be patient and gentle in all circumstances, not simply because you have to, but because you have faith in God? Will God reward you for it? You bet: he will bring his people to you, so that you can share the good news and minister to them. Will God help you? Indeed, for meekness is not your work, but it's the fruit of the Holy Spirit (c.f. Galatians 5:22). He will produce this character in you, if you learn to "let go and let him". May God bless you with this fruit of the Spirit and the blessings that come with it. Amen.