



Matthew 5:5

The Spirit–Controlled Person

Jesus said that we can live above the chances, changes and circumstances we face in life. It is easy for us to give our full attention to difficulties in life and become bitter, angry and filled with self-pity. If we focus on hurts and disappointments there is a souring of our attitudes and we become bitter, resentful and hostile toward life.

It is not circumstances and feelings, but attitudes that determine our life-joy. We have a choice every day regarding the attitudes we will embrace for that day. The third beatitude helps us to focus on the right attitudes toward life. Who is a "meek" or better "gentle" person? You might be surprised at this principle of the God controlled person.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SPIRIT–CONTROLLED PERSON

Jesus said, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5 NASB). The King James reads, "Blessed are the meek . . . "

The word for "meek" or "gentle" is one of the most beautiful and at the same time one of the most difficult words in the New Testament to translate. Most scholars point out there is little difference between "poor in spirit" in verse three and "meek" in verse five. The emphasis Jesus makes here is on man's relationship to God and his fellow man.

The gentle, meek, humble people in verse five are the same ones viewed from a different perspective in verse three. The word Jesus used in verse 5, *praeis*, can hardly be distinguished from "poor." It contained echoes of someone who is unimportant.

Do not confuse this "meekness" or "gentleness" with weakness. Our modern English word "meek" has negative connotations of someone who is psychologically submissive and easily imposed upon.

Jesus is emphasizing a strength that comes from submission and trust in God. These are people who don't put confidence in their own power. They don't heed it because they are trusting in God. He has inner strength because he has a right relationship with God.

Our word stresses humility as opposed to arrogant pride. It is an attitude that causes us to be open to new ideas, to grow in grace, to forgive and be forgiven. But it also includes a humility that accepts truth from others that we acknowledge ourselves. I can accept the fact that I am a sinner and confess it

to God, but what is my attitude when you point out sin in my life?

This is the kind of humility that will allow us to become aware of our spiritual needs. It doesn't reject becoming convicted of our poverty in spirit. It is our only proper attitude toward God. The gentle man knows his own ignorance, limitation and needs. It is freedom from all self-importance. Jesus described this attitude in Matthew 5:3-4 when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Numerous scholars bring out various shades of meaning in this word. The adjective *praus* means a gentle, humble, considerate, and courteous person. It describes the proper balance between too much and too little anger. "There are some things in life that should make us angry. Here is the person who is "always angry at the right time, and never angry at the wrong time" with just the precise amount of anger. The gentle man is the man who can patiently endure. He is proactive instead of aggressive.

The ancient Greek physicians used this word to describe proper amount of medicine for the sick patient. The appropriate amount of medicine will bring a raging fever under control. Too much of the medication will kill a patient, too little will have no effect.

It can describe a calm gentle soothing breeze on the oceanfront along a beautiful beach as opposed to the raging winds of major hurricanes and typhoons. Our word describes the mild light wind on the ocean during calmer days. It is awesome power of God under control.

This word for gentle is also the regular word to describe a wild stallion which has been broken. His furious wild energy has been harnessed to obey the word of command. When I think of this word I think of Black Beauty full of wild and furious energy that is harnessed and at the end of the movie we see a child climbing upon this marvelous animal and riding off into a beautiful golden sunset. It is power under control. It is not someone who is "meek and mild," weak and effeminate, but one who is "a gentle spirit." It is a humble and gentle attitude toward God and others which is determined by a true estimate of us.

The "gentle" man is under the power and control of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit brings every passion and desire into submission to God. It includes self-control, but goes beyond that to give power and inner strength to overcome the most profound evil powers of our old human nature. Without His strength we could never overcome the behaviors in unregenerate nature.

This is the principle of the Spirit controlled man. We can't have true spiritual prosperity without putting into practice this principle.

THE PRACTICE OF THE SPIRIT-CONTROLLED PERSON

Gentleness forces us to take inventory of our attitudes and behaviors. It expresses itself in our attitudes toward God, ourselves and how we treat others.

A humble attitude toward God and others makes us gentle, humble, sensitive and patient in our dealings with others.

The Holy Spirit enables us to overcome carnal behaviors. "Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!" (Galatians 5:19-21, NET) To overcome these passions and behaviors we need more than self-control. We need God's help!

This beatitude is describing the blessing of the man who is completely Spirit controlled. It is strength under God's control. Only the Spirit of God can give perfect mastery of a person's desires. What Jesus is emphasizing is the Spirit controlled life. This gentleness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul said, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). There is our word again, "gentleness."

The meek or gentle person is walking in the Spirit (vv. 16-18). The opposite of gentleness is the work of the flesh (vv. 19-21). Who is in control of my life? Is it self or is it the Holy Spirit? If everything is centered around I, me and mine the sinful nature will dominate and produce its fruit. However, when the Holy Spirit is in control the radiance of Jesus Christ is seen in our lives.

How do you handle pride, self-glory, aggression, manipulation, the tendency to withdraw and give the silent treatment, the demand for position, power, privilege, and status? These are manifestations of the flesh or our sinful human nature.

Let's take a quick inventory. How do we measure up to God's view of gentleness?

- What is my attitude toward the circumstances in my life?
- How do I act when I have the power to control a person or situation?
- What is my attitude toward God's Word?
- What is my attitude toward a division in the Body of Christ?
- What is my attitude toward those who disagree with me?
- How do I handle rejection? How do I relate to others?
- How do I use my emotional, political, personal power?

The gentle person accepts God's dealings as for his good without disputing with Him. He will not fight God. He looks at life and sees God's hand in all his circumstances. With deep conviction he can say with the apostle Paul, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Someone expressed that conviction in these words of faith. "God is too kind to do anything cruel. . . Too wise to make a mistake. . . Too deep to explain Himself. When we know WHO, we can stop asking, 'Why?'" That is your gentle person who under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is our best example of gentleness. The prophet Isaiah spoke of Him: "This fulfilled what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I take great delight. I

Isaiah the prophet: Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I take great delight. I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed or extinguish a smoldering wick, until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope " (Matthew 12:17-21, NET). Jesus said to His disciples: "Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29, NET).

Imagine the Roman soldiers casting their dice and the rabble in front of the cross shouting, Crucify Him, crucify Him! At the cross we see Jesus bearing no resentment, no grudges. He committed His way entirely to the Father. He could have called down ten thousand angels, but He chose to pray, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." There is infinite power under control!

David was being hunted down by King Saul who threatened to kill him. When David had the chance to slit his throat he refused. Here was power under control. He refused to touch God's anointed.

The patriarch Joseph chose to forgive his foolish brothers who sold him as a slave when they arrived in Egypt to purchase grain. He was forgotten among men but remembered by God. It was a man under God's control who could say to them, "And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. . . God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. . . God has made me lord of all Egypt" (Genesis 45:5-9). God chose Joseph to deliver them and "the best of all the land of Egypt is yours" (v. 20).

How can we possibly forget the apostle Paul singing praises to God while in prison in Philippi? Paul and Silas were "dragged into the marketplace before the authorities." They were "beaten with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. . . (Acts 16:19- 25). God used the circumstances to add to His kingdom. Here was the Spirit controlled man yielding himself to God for strength to overcome the chances, the changes and circumstances in his life.

Each of these great saints accepted God's manner of dealing with them as His good and perfect will. It was for God's glory and their good. God always gives His very best to those who humble themselves before Him.

The gentle man will not fight against God or struggle and contend with Him. But how do we treat those who mistreat us? How do we respond to those who stab us in the back? The gentle person leaves everything in the hands of a loving God. The condition upon which we enter our spiritual inheritance in Christ is not might, but meekness. Everything is ours if we are Christ's. Therefore, to those who are willing to yield their lives to the work of the Holy Spirit there is the promise "they shall inherit the earth."

THE PROMISE TO THE SPIRIT-CONTROLLED PERSON

"Blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth."

The verb "inherit" here means "to receive by lot, and then inherit, possess." It signifies to take possession of your inheritance. It is yours; here take possession and enjoy it.

It is not the inheritance given upon the death of a testator that Jesus has in mind here. The thought is eschatological. Jesus is looking forward to the coming of His messianic kingdom. When He returns in glory the meek will inherit the earth. In the end it is the gentle, not the self-assertive who will have a place in God's

the meek will inherit the earth. In the end it is the gentle, not the self-assertive who will have a place in God's kingdom. "If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12; cf. Lk. 22:29-30; Matt. 20:28; 25:31-34; Rev. 3:21; 20:4).

The promise Jesus gave looks forward to the kingdom of God whereby He rules all over the earth (v. 3). There is coming a day when the LORD God will reign upon the earth and His people will enjoy their inheritance. The New English Bible reads, "They shall have the earth for their possession." Phillips says, "for the whole earth will belong to them." Another way of translating it, "God will give them the whole earth to possess."

What is God going to give? "God will give them what He has promised" or "God will give them all the blessings (or, good things) He has promised."

What does it mean to inherit the earth?

I believe that the fullest realization of man's redemption finds its fulfillment only in the person of Jesus Christ. Man was originally created sinless. But Adam disobeyed God and thrust all his descendants into a horrible depravity of sin. Therefore, redeemed humanity has been elevated by means of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to the highest rank of all created beings. Angels peek in to see what God is doing with His elect. God in His grace and redemption through Jesus Christ has elevated His chosen ones to the most sublime heights possible short of becoming members of the Godhead. Now let us not make the foolish mistake of the cults that teach that we become gods and will one day go off into the universe and populate our own planets. That is sheer error and nonsense. However, the salvation that we receive by believing in Christ is more than a restoration of what God fully intended when He made man in His image because man has been redeemed. The believer is *in* Christ. When we look into the face of Christ we see how far we have fallen and what God fully intended us to be. God sees us *complete* in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ* (Colossians 1:28). The Holy Spirit is at work in the believer conforming us to the likeness of Christ. His goal is to present us finished, complete, mature, full grown and perfect to the Father. The mature believer belongs to the fullness of Christ. Jesus Christ is the pattern for normal Christianity. There can be no greater exaltation of the redeemed. This is what He has accomplished for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because of what Christ has done I want to be the person God fully intended me to be in Christ Jesus.

Let us claim our inheritance. God has something wonderful waiting for us. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

One of the Ecuadorian martyrs said before his death, "I want to live to the hilt of every situation that I believe to be the will of God."

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