

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 26/03/2008

STUDY 3

MILD-TEMPERED, GENTLE SPIRIT

Matthew 5:5

The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to His word and to His rod, who follow His directions, and comply with His designs, and are *gentle towards all men* (Titus 3:2); who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent, or return a soft answer; and who can show their displeasure when there is occasion for it, without being transported into any indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot; and in their patience keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of any thing else. *They* are the meek, who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits. These meek ones are here represented as happy, even in this world.

1. Meekness explained

Matthew 5:5; 11:29; Ephesians 4:1–2; II Corinthians 10:1; Titus 3:2; James 1:20–21; Psalm 25:9; Galatians 5:23; Isaiah 37:11; Numbers 12:3; Psalm 106:33; Ezekiel 3:14; Jonah 4:1; Acts 15:37–19

A study of meekness usage in Scripture reveals, first, that it is linked with and cannot be separated from *lowliness*: "Learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart"; "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness". Second, it is associated with and cannot be divorced from *gentleness*: "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"; "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men". Third, "receive with meekness the engrafted word" is opposed to "the *wrath* of man worketh not the righteousness of God". Fourth, the Divine promise is "the meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way", intimating that this grace consists of a *pliant* heart and will.

The spirit of meekness was perfectly exemplified only by the Lord Jesus Christ, who was "meek and lowly in heart." In His people this blessed spirit fluctuates, oftentimes beclouded by risings up of the flesh. Of Moses it is said, "They provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips". Ezekiel says of himself: "I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me". Of Jonah, after his miraculous deliverance, we read: "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry". Even the humble Barnabas parted from Paul in a bitter temper. What warnings are these! How much we need to learn of Christ! But meekness must not be confounded with weakness. True meekness is ever manifested by yieldedness to God's will, yet it will not yield a principle of righteousness or compromise with evil. God-given meekness can also stand up for God-given rights: when God's glory is impeached, we must have a zeal which is as hot as fire. Moses was "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth", yet when he saw the Israelites dancing before the golden calf, in zeal for Jehovah's honour, he broke the two tables of stone, and put to the sword those who had transgressed. Above all, remember how

Christ Himself, in concern for His Father's glory, made a whip of cords and drove the desecrators out of the temple. Meekness restrains from private revenge, but it in nowise conflicts with the requirements of fidelity to God, His cause, and His people.

2. The fruits of meekness

Matthew 5:5; Leviticus 10:3 I Samuel 3:18; Psalm 39:9; 22:6; John 18:11; Galatians 6:1

There is a *natural* meekness of spirit, springing from love of ease, defect in sensibility and firmness, and the predominancy of other passions, which should be carefully distinguished from evangelical meekness. It is timid and easily deterred from good, and persuaded to evil; it leads to criminality in one extreme, as impetuosity of spirit does in another; it is often found in ungodly men; and it sometimes forms the grand defect in the character of pious persons, as in the case of Eli, and of Jehoshaphat. Divine grace operates in rendering such men of an opposite temper more yielding and quiet. The meekness to which the blessing is annexed is not constitutional, but *gracious*: and men of the most vehement and implacable dispositions, by looking to Jesus through the grace of God, learn to curb their tempers, to cease from resentment, to avoid giving offence by injurious words and actions, to make concessions and forgive injuries.

Where this grace is, the enmity of the carnal mind is subdued, and its possessor bears God's chastenings with quietness and patience. Illustrations thereof are seen in the cases of Aaron, Eli, and David. Supremely it was exemplified by Christ, who declared, "I am a worm, and no man", which had reference not only to His being humbled into the dust, but also to the fact that there was nothing in Him which resisted the judgments of God: "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?". He was "led [not dragged] as a lamb to the slaughter": when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He was buffeted, He threatened not. He was the very King of meekness.

Inasmuch as meekness is that spirit which has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering, and brought into sweet resignation to the will of God, it causes the believer to bear patiently those insults and injuries which he receives at the hands of his fellows, and makes him ready to accept instruction or admonition from the least of the saints, moving him to think more highly of others than of himself. Meekness enables the Christian to endure provocations without being inflamed by them: he remains cool when others get heated. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted". This means, not with a lordly and domineering attitude, not with a harsh and censorious temper, not with a love of finding fault and desire for inflicting the discipline of the church, but with gentleness, humility and patience.

3. The blessedness of the meek

Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11, 16; Proverbs 15:16; Ephesians 1:3; II Peter 3:13; Daniel 7:27; Revelation 3:21; 5:10; I Corinthians 3:21–22; II Corinthians 6:10; Psalm 21:26; 147:6; 25:9; Isaiah 29:19

They are *blessed*, for they have the most comfortable, undisturbed enjoyment of themselves, their friends, their God; they are fit for any relation, and condition, any company. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." The *meek* are those who have the greatest enjoyment of the good things of the present life. Delivered from a greedy and grasping spirit, they are content with such things as they have. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked". Contentment of mind is one of the fruits of meekness of spirit. The proud and restless do not "inherit the earth," though they may own many acres of it. The humble Christian has far more enjoyment in a cottage than the wicked has in a palace. "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith". No doubt there is also reference to the fact that the meek shall ultimately inherit the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness". *They shall inherit the earth*. The meek shall inherit it in two ways: (i) they shall enjoy it more fully while in it; (ii) they shall finally, as part of the triumphant church, possess and enjoy it. *The meek* and quiet are observed to live the most easy lives compared with the froward and turbulent. *They shall inherit the land, the land of Canaan*, a type of heaven. All the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek.