



“Mighty Are The Meek” - October 20, 2019

OPEN

What is your concept of strength and might? Hafþór Björnsson is a physically powerful human being. He is the first person to win the Arnold Strongman Classic, Europe's Strongest Man and World's Strongest Man in the same year.

“Game of Thrones” fans know him as “The Mountain. To support his 6’ 9”, 400 lbs. frame he consumes 10,000 calories per day. However, in Matthew 5:5 we read, “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.” Does that mean God would rather us be weak and powerless?

DIG

Blessing Number Three

Irish writer George Bernard Shaw said, “England and America are two countries separated by a common language.” We experience much confusion with the English language. So what does the word “meek” actually mean?

- **Contemporary understanding of meekness**

When you hear the work “meek and...” it is likely that “...mild” comes to mind. Here is a definition: “*Of gentle and long-suffering disposition; submissive; compliant; lacking spirit or backbone; humble; lowly; gentle; indulgent; kind; compassionate.*” Thanks sources such as **Funk & Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language** this is the sense of “meekness” that has settled into our thinking.

These qualities are not bad. But they cause much misdirection when we read about meekness in the Bible. If we only have a contemporary understanding of meekness, we are left with a very anemic understanding of Jesus’s words “blessed are the meek”. We are left with the idea that meekness is weakness, or a particular personality type rather than a quality of someone who has been “kingdomized” and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Think of it this way – our notion is that aggressiveness is the opposite of being meek. Consider the example of one of the greatest goons, Dave Schultz and the “Broadstreet Bullies” (Philadelphia Flyers of the 1970’s). When we see such violent, aggressive behavior we conclude that meekness is to act in an opposite way. In hockey, the opposite reaction is to “turtle”. Do you think that this is what Jesus has in mind for us? Is He asking us to be a spiritual turtle?

- **Biblical understanding of meekness**

In older translations of the Bible, you will see more occurrences of the English word “meek” because it was often used when more current translations use “humble”. In Matthew 5:5 Jesus used a term which is not just “humble” but indicates a “necessary balance of exercising power and avoiding harshness”. So it refers to a person who is “temperate” and knows how to display an appropriate combination of assertiveness and gentleness. So, meekness is not powerlessness – but power under control.

Think of Jesus. At times He Jesus invited people into a place of rest. At other times He asserted authority over false teachers. On one occasion He acted with violence to clear out the Temple of wickedness. When on trial and facing execution, He calmly submitted to God’s purpose.

Now, what of the promise to “inherit the earth”? Jesus’ words in Mathew 5:5 quote from Psalm 37:11: “But the meek [lit. humble] will inherit the land [of promise] and enjoy peace and prosperity.” It is important to note that in Psalm 37:1-10 commands are given to those who were in danger of giving up because of the evil people. Instructions include:

- *do not fret, trust*
- *cultivate faithfulness*
- *delight in God*
- *commit your way to Him*
- *rest*
- *cease from anger*

This is a wonderful description of meekness. The pledge to kingdomed followers of Jesus is that they, in time, will be vindicated and victorious. R. T. France put it this way, “God would give them the high place they would not seize for themselves.” (**Matthew: Tyndale New Testament Commentary**, Vol I, IVP, 1985, 110)

Moses - The meekest Man

Who typifies meekness when you think about characters from the Bible? Does Moses come to mind? In Numbers 12:3 we read that Moses was more “meek” (see KJV, ESV) than any other man. In this case, it was a reference to his “humility” (as in the NASB, NIV, NLT). But what are we to make of this description, regardless of how it is translated? Consider two ways that Moses life was transformed – how he became “kingdomized”.

- **Meekness shaped by human personality**

It is clear from what we know about Moses that he had a personality that was more comfortable with anonymity than in being a celebrity. So it is quite tragic that when Moses “mourned” over injustice and saw an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew slave he lost control and flew into a murderous rage (Exodus 2:11-12).

This is an obvious example that our personality does not guarantee we will be *biblically meek*. Nor was Moses meek when he only offered self-doubt in response to God's call (Exodus 3:1-22). True meekness is not just a personality trait exhibited by certain people.

- ***Meekness shaped by divine presence***

In contrast to his character, after being in the presence of God, we see examples of meekness developing. Moses met with God in a powerful way on Sinai. Immediately after, he was assertive with the sin of the people (Exodus 32:1-35). After being in the tent of meeting he interceded boldly for the people before the Lord (Exodus 33:7-23). And there are other examples of the way Moses heart was reshaped to be a meek man, because of the Holy Spirit.

Author A. W. Tozer wrote, "Jesus calls us to His rest, and meekness is His method. The meek man cares not at all who is greater than he, for he has long ago decided that the esteem of the world is not worth the effort."

REFLECT

Meekness is a mandate that all Jesus-followers have been given. How will we do this? Here are three take-aways.

- ***Live within a dual context***

Dallas Willard writes about a "dual context". "According to the wisdom of Jesus...every event takes on a different reality and meaning, depending on whether it is seen only in the context of the visible or also in the context of God's full world [kingdom], where we [believers] all as a matter of fact live." (***Divine Conspiracy***, HarperOne, 1997, 88)

In Mark 12 Jesus contrasted offerings of the rich and a poor widow. He said her two small coins were greater! The offering seemed meaningless in the human context. But seen in the context of the Kingdom of God it was powerful!

- ***Live with great courage***

True, biblical meekness is not just "turtling" to our circumstances. Consider [Corrie Ten Boom](#). Her life was marked by great meekness and great courage as she resisted the Nazi forces that invaded her city of Harlem, Holland in WWII. Corrie even faced the horrors of Ravensbruck after she was discovered rescuing Jews. And she also had to live out meekness by practicing the message of forgiveness that she preached and wrote about.

- ***Live towards changed character***

Don't just live by a personality trait. In I Thessalonians 2:12 we read that believers must "walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." As we submit, the Holy Spirit will transform our character.