

Lesson 4: A Submitted Spirit

As we learned in the last lesson, the mourning heart sees its need for change and sorrows over the damage it causes due to its self-centered appetite. However, the unrighteous appetite of the heart still remains. One may be greatly grieved over his sin and still be a slave to it. Victory is yet to come for the mourning heart. Continuing in the Sermon on the Mount, after Jesus addresses those who mourn, He then addresses the meek.

Turn to Matthew 5:5 and read aloud

Meekness is often mistaken for weakness. Contrary to this notion, meekness is associated with power. The word translated “meek” from Koine Greek is *praus*, and it means “power under control.” When we are submitted to God and the authorities He has ordained over us, we can be powerful instruments for His glory. His strength is perfected in us only when we are submitted to Him. We must put on the harness and give God the reins. Only then can He move in power through us. Therefore, the next step to receive victory over sin and grow in Christian character is to take on the meekness of Christ. One must submit to the One who alone can change the appetite of his heart. In the next two lessons, we are going to study the importance of having a spirit and body that are submitted to God.

Before addressing the topic of meek submission, we must first understand the concept of authority. Authority is derived from the Greek word *exousia* and it means “the right to exercise power.” Authority is administered through laws. These laws represent the will of the lawgiver. Just as parents’ rules display their will for what is to occur in their household, so God’s laws display His will for all that is to occur in the heavens and on the earth. These laws are designed to be a means of keeping order. Laws without penalties are at most suggestions, but the power to enforce them gives them authority. The ultimate authority in the universe is God and His Word and all other authority is subject to God (**James 4:7, James 1:21, John 19:11**). Other categories of authority, which stem from the authority of God, will be discussed later and they include the family, the workplace, the government, and the church. He administers blessings and curses through these authorities (**Deut. 28**). The officers of curses are often the devil and his angels. As Christians, when we are not submitted, as it is in our sinful nature to rebel, we give place to the devil and allow him to have authority in our lives (**Ephesians 4:27**).

The use of authority in the Bible is much different than its use by the world. The world uses the power of authority to lord it over people and control them for selfish gain. May it not be so among God’s people! Christ explained that the power of authority is meant to be used to serve others and bless them (**Mark 10:44-45**). It ought to be used for the protection and guidance of those who are under it (**Psalms 23**).

Equally important to the understanding of the establishment of God’s authority on the earth is having the right response to it. The role of all who are under authority is submission to the will of those who are in authority over them. The practice of self control is simply the yielding of self to God and allowing Him to be in control. When one submits to God-ordained authorities, in obedience and honor, souls are protected (**Hebrews 13:17, Philippians 2:29-30**). It is for this reason that Satan seeks to destroy the institution of submission to authority.

Proverbs tells us to “fear the Lord and the king” (**Prov. 24:21**). We must fear both God and the authorities He assigns over us, trusting He will protect, guide, and bless us through them. Life is peaceful and fruitful and free of worry when we submit to authority (**Phil 4:11**). Meekness should not only be practiced toward authorities, but we ought to be willing to yield to one another (**Eph. 5:21, I Pet. 5:5, James 3:17**).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom and it teaches us to submit to the will of God over our own will (**Prov. 9:10, James 3:13-15**). Fearing authority is not a bad thing if you fear the Lord’s authority above all. This is an inherent characteristic of faith in God. In **Daniel 1:10** we see an example of a man fearing the punishment of his ruler and the power of his authority. Whereas all other authorities and principalities are flawed and have the potential to do evil toward us, we fear God because He is good (**Hosea 3:5**). This makes all the difference.

Rebellion is the opposite response of submission to authority. Rebellion can manifest in obvious ways, or be much more subtle issues of the heart as is described in (**Prov. 81:15**). Satan was the first to rebel against God’s authority and he set the model for us in our sinful ways (**Ezek. 28:12-16**). It is important to note that to honorably and respectably resist a command from an authority that conflicts with God’s Word is not rebellion. We are told to “obey God rather than men” in these circumstances (**Acts 5:29**).

Just as the reasons for blessedness are expressed for those who are poor in spirit and those who mourn, we find in **Matthew 5:5** that the meek are blessed, because “they shall inherit the earth.” At first glance, this passage may be quite confusing. As Christians, we are called to turn from the things of this world, that we might know and love the living God. “Why would we want to inherit the earth if we are citizens of heaven?” (**Phil. 3:20**). Many other questions arise. “Is it speaking of the present earth or the future earth?” (**II Pet. 3:13**). “Is it speaking of a literal earth or a figurative earth?” “What does meekness have to do with the earth?”

First it is important to look at this source of blessedness in light of the other sources of blessedness for each of the beatitudes. The beatitudes define who are the blessed of God. They are not natural to man, but are supernatural. The philosophies of this world, for the most part, directly oppose the principles taught in the beatitudes. The beatitudes and their sources of blessedness are heavenly principles and they transcend time. Therefore, the inheritance of the earth for the meek is not addressing the current earth or the future earth exclusively, but encompasses both.

Our next step is to discover what it means to inherit the earth and, in light of that knowledge, why one would want to inherit the earth in which we live today. We find in Psalm 37:10-11 that there is a contrast drawn between the wicked and the meek. Whereas the wicked are said to have their days cut short, the meek are said to inherit the earth and live in abundance of peace. Inheritance in this case seems to be linked to words like survival and endurance.

Turn to Exodus 20:12 and read aloud

Father and mother represent the authorities that God places over our lives for our protection and guidance. Thus, to honor father and mother, as well as all other authority God

ordains in one's life, is to practice meekness. The promise of walking in this meekness is long life in the earth. The only place of protection in life is under the authorities God ordains. Therefore, the days of the wicked may be shortened and lack peace, whereas those whose spirit is yielded to authority will be protected and live long in peace. This is not to say that suffering and persecution will not occur in the Christian life, but the gentle, submissive, and quiet life of the meek will generally result in longevity and peace (**I Thess. 4:11-12**).

Authorities ordained by God:

- The family
 - 1. Husband and wife
 - 1. **I Corinthians 11:3**
 - 2. **Colossians 3:18-19**
 - 3. **Ephesians 5:22-33**
 - 4. **I Peter 3:1-7**
 - 2. Parents and children
 - 1. **Colossians 3:20-21**
 - 2. **Ephesians 6:1-4**
- The boss and professor
 - 1. **Colossians 3:22-4:1**
 - 2. **Ephesians 6:5-9**
 - 3. **I Peter 2:18-25**
- The government
 - 1. **Romans 13:1-7**
 - 2. **I Peter 2:13-17**
 - 3. **Matthew 22:15-22**
- The church
 - 1. **I Thessalonians 5:12-13**
 - 2. **Hebrews 13:7, 17**
 - 3. **I Timothy 5:17-18**
 - 4. **I Peter 5:1-5**
 - 5. **I Cor. 14:34**
 - 6. **I Tim. 2:11**
- Pray for your authorities (**I Timothy 2:1-4**). You cannot expect your authorities to be perfect when you never pray for them. No matter their shortcomings, God is able to bless and protect you through them. He is sovereign and He has authority over all. It is possible that God may place you under someone's authority simply so that He can use you to pray for them to inherit salvation or to humble you ... or both!

A.W. Tozer once wrote, "The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto."