

Meekness is a concept that is as misunderstood and as underappreciated today as it was in Jesus' time. As then, so now meekness has become synonymous with weakness. Throughout history, weakness has never been a desired trait. But maybe no more so than in first century Israel among a people who were looking forward to the promised Messiah and his deliverance.

Within Jewish society there were four basic expectations as to how the Messiah would deliver his people. The Pharisees held the most popular view. They believed that the Messiah would come with great fanfare and miraculous power which he would use to cast off the yoke of Roman oppression. The Sadducees, who were largely despised by the people, were expecting a political figure that would bring about prosperity. The Zealots were looking for a mighty warrior who would lead them in battle to vanquish their foes. The Essenes, who were physically and philosophically isolated from society, believed he would come as one who preached and practiced isolation.

In short, the Pharisees pictured the kingdom of God as a miraculous kingdom. The Sadducees imagined a materialistic kingdom. The Zealots longed for a military kingdom and the Essenes anticipated a monastic kingdom. The idea of a meek Messiah leading a meek people was not what they expected or wanted. They understood military power and miracle power. Notice the emphasis on "power." Meekness was and still is perceived as weakness.

With that understanding of Jesus' context, we can see just how radical his words in Matthew 5:5 must have seemed to those who heard him. We can also relate to those ancient philosophies and expectations, which means those words are just as radical today.

So let's take some time to understand this radical message of "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

Scripture: Matthew 5:5

I. The Inheritors of the Earth

A. **The Messiah's Promise to the Meek**

1. Inherit the Earth

- a) When Jesus returns and restores earth to its former sinless glory, the meek (and only the meek) will rule alongside him

B. **Meaning of Meekness**

1. What it is

- a) Gentle
 - (1) Used of soothing medications or gentle breezes
- b) Power under control

- (1) Used of animals whose wild spirit had been broken by a trainer so they could be used for work
 - (a) A wild animal is not useful for work it is actually dangerous
 - (b) A medication that is too strong is not helpful it is actually detrimental
 - (c) A strong wind is not pleasant it is actually destructive

2. What it is not

- a) Considered Weakness
 - (1) Uses its resources appropriately
 - (2) Not abusive
- b) Cowardice
 - (1) Confidence in God
- c) Compromise
 - (1) Conviction not wishy-washy
- d) Consumed with self
 - (1) Vengeance
 - (2) Rights

C. **Manifestation of Meekness**

1. Abraham with Lot
 - a) For the sake of a favorable testimony, Abraham didn't invoke his rights
2. Joseph
 - a) For the sake of future generations, Joseph didn't take vengeance on his brothers
3. Jesus
 - a) For the sake of forgiveness and freedom, Jesus didn't use his power
4. Paul
 - a) For the sake future ministry and rewards, Paul didn't put confidence in himself