

The Beatitudes the Third Beatitude

by A.W. Pink

The third Beatitude, 'Blessed are the meek,' describes the humility and lowliness of heart that is essential for inheriting the earth and enjoying the good things of the present life.

Scripture: Numbers 12:3, Psalm 25:9, Psalm 149:4, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 5:5, Matthew 21:5, Romans 8:17, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:2, 2 Peter 3:13

Topics: "Humility", "Meekness"

Description

A.W. Pink expounds on the third Beatitude, 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,' emphasizing that meekness is synonymous with humility. He illustrates this by referencing biblical figures like Moses, who exemplified true humility by choosing God's path over worldly honors. Pink argues that meekness is essential for receiving God's guidance and blessings, as it reflects a spirit of lowliness and dependence on divine mercy. He also highlights that true meekness is not weakness but a strength that stands firm in faith and righteousness. Ultimately, the meek are promised both present contentment and future inheritance in God's kingdom.

Transcript

THE BEATITUDES

THE THIRD BEATITUDE

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"

Matthew 5:5

have been considerable differences of opinion as to the precise significance of the word meek. Some regard its meaning as patience, a spirit of resignation; some as unselfishness, a spirit of self-abnegation; others as gentleness, a spirit of non-retaliation, bearing afflictions quietly. Doubtless, there is a measure of truth in each of these definitions. Yet it appears to the writer that they hardly go deep enough, for they fail to take note of the order of this third Beatitude.

Personally, we would define meekness as humility. "Blessed are the meek," that is, the humble, the lowly. Let us see if other passages bear this out. The first time the word meek occurs in Scripture is in Numbers 12:3. Here the Spirit of God has pointed out a contrast from that which is recorded in the previous verses. There we read of Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by

Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?" Such language betrayed the pride and haughtiness of their hearts, their self-seeking and craving for honor.

As the antithesis of this we read, "Now the man Moses was very meek." This must mean that he was actuated by a spirit the very opposite of the spirit of his brother and sister. Moses was humble, lowly, and self-renouncing. This is recorded for our admiration and instruction in Hebrews 11:24-26. Moses turned his back on worldly honors and earthly riches, deliberately choosing the life of a pilgrim rather than that of a courtier. He chose the wilderness in preference to the palace.

The humbleness of Moses is seen again when Jehovah first appeared to him in Midian and commissioned him to lead His people out of Egypt. "Who am I," he said, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). What lowliness these words breathe! Yes, Moses was very meek. Other Scripture texts bear out, and seem to necessitate, the definition suggested above. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Ps. 25:9).

What can this mean but that the humble and lowly-hearted are the ones whom God promises to counsel and instruct? "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass" (Matthew 21:5). Here is meekness or lowliness incarnate. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Is it not plain that this means that a spirit of humility is required in him who would be used of God in restoring an erring brother?

We are to learn of Christ, who was "meek and lowly in heart." The latter term explains the former. Note that they are linked together again in Ephesians 4:2, where the order is "lowliness and meekness." Here the order is deliberately reversed from that in Matthew 11:29. This shows us that they are synonymous terms. Having thus sought to establish that meekness, in the Scriptures, signified humility and lowliness, let us now note how this is further borne out by the context and then endeavor to determine the manner in which such meekness finds expression.

It must be steadily kept in mind that in these Beatitudes our Lord is describing the orderly development of God's work of grace as it is experientially realized in the soul. First, there is poverty of spirit: a sense of my insufficiency and nothingness. Next, there is mourning over my lost condition and sorrowing over the awfulness of my sins against God. Following this, in order of spiritual experience, is humbleness of soul. The one in whom the Spirit of God has worked, producing a sense of nothingness and of need, is now brought into the dust before God.

Speaking as one whom God used in the ministry of the Gospel, the Apostle Paul said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). The weapons that the apostles used were the searching, condemning, humbling truths of Scripture. These, as applied effectually by the Spirit, were mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, that is, the powerful prejudices and self-righteous defenses within which sinful men took refuge.

The results are the same today: proud imaginations or reasonings--the enmity of the carnal mind and the opposition of the newly regenerate mind concerning salvation is now brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. By nature every sinner is Pharisaical, desiring to be justified by the works of the Law. By nature we all inherit from our first parents the tendency to manufacture for ourselves a covering to hide

our shame. By nature every member of the human race walks in the way of Cain, who sought to find acceptance with God on the ground of an offering produced by his own labors.

In a word, we desire to gain a standing before God on the basis of personal merits; we wish to purchase salvation by our good deeds; we are anxious to win heaven by our own doings. God's way of salvation is too humbling to suit the carnal mind, for it removes all ground for boasting. It is therefore unacceptable to the proud heart of the unregenerate. Man wants to have a hand in his salvation. To be told that God will receive nought from him, that salvation is solely a matter of Divine mercy, that eternal life is only for those who come empty-handed to receive it solely as a matter of charity, is offensive to the self-righteous religionist.

But not so to the one who is poor in spirit and who mourns over his vile and wretched state. The very word mercy is music to his ears. Eternal life as God's free gift suits his poverty-stricken condition. Grace--the sovereign favor of God to the hell-deserving--is just what he feels he must have! Such a one no longer has any thought of justifying himself in his own eyes; all his haughty objections against God's benevolence are now silenced. He is glad to own himself a beggar and bow in the dust before God.

Once, like Naaman, he rebelled against the humbling terms announced by God's servant; but now, like Naaman at the end, he is glad to dismount from his chariot of pride and take his place in the dust before the Lord. It was when Naaman bowed before the humbling word of God's servant that he was healed of his leprosy. In the same way, when the sinner owns his worthlessness, Divine favor is shown to him. Such a one receives the Divine benediction: "Blessed are the meek." Speaking anticipatively through Isaiah, the Savior said, "The Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Isa. 61:1).

And again it is written, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Ps. 149:4). While humility of soul in bowing to God's way of salvation is the primary application of the third Beatitude, it must not be limited to that. Meekness is also an intrinsic aspect of the "fruit of the Spirit" that is wrought in and produced through the Christian (Gal. 5:22, 23). It is that quality of spirit that is found in one who has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering and brought into sweet resignation to the will of God.

When in exercise, it is that grace in the believer that causes him to bear patiently insults and injuries, that makes him ready to be instructed and admonished by the least eminent of saints, that leads him to esteem others more highly than himself (Phil. 2:3), and that teaches him to ascribe all that is good in himself to the sovereign grace of God. On the other hand, true meekness is not weakness. A striking proof of this is furnished in Acts 16:35-37. The apostles had been wrongfully beaten and cast into prison.

On the next day the magistrates gave orders for their release, but Paul said to their agents, "Let them come themselves and fetch us out." God-given meekness can stand up for God-given rights. When one of the officers smote our Lord, He answered, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?" (John 18:23). 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" (Ps. 106:33). Ezekiel says of himself: "I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezek. 3:14). Of Jonah, after his miraculous deliverance, we read: "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry (Jonah 4:1). Even the humble Barnabas parted from Paul in a bitter

temper (Acts 15:37-39). What warnings are these! How much we need to learn of Christ!

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Our Lord was alluding to, and applying, Psalm 37:11. The promise seems to have both a literal and spiritual meaning: "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" (Ps. 37:16).

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" (Prov. 15:16). "The meek shall inherit the earth." As we have said, this third Beatitude is an allusion to Psalm 37:11. Most probably the Lord Jesus was using Old Testament language to express New Covenant truth.

The flesh and blood of John 6:50-58 and the water of John 3:5 have, to the regenerate, a spiritual meaning; so here with the word earth or land. Both in Hebrew and in Greek, the principal terms rendered by our English words earth and land may be translated either literally or spiritually, depending upon the context. His words, literally understood, are, "they shall inherit the land," i.e., Canaan, "the land of promise." He speaks of the blessings of the new economy in the language of Old Testament prophecy.

Israel according to the flesh (the external people of God under the former economy) were a figure of Israel according to the spirit (the spiritual people of God under the new economy); and Canaan, the [earthly] inheritance of the former, is the type of that aggregate of heavenly and spiritual blessings which form the inheritance of the latter. To "inherit the land" is to enjoy the peculiar blessings of the people of God under the new economy; it is to become heirs of the world, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ [Rom. 8:17].

It is to be "blessed.., with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" [Eph. 1:3], to enjoy that true peace and rest of which Israel's in Canaan was a figure (Dr. John Brown). No doubt there is also reference to the fact that the meek shall ultimately inherit the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

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