

Monday

But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

Psalm 37:11

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught several beatitudes in which He announced various blessings on those who follow God faithfully. The beatitude of Matthew 5:5 points back to Psalm 37:11. In both verses, God speaks of the meek (gentle) receiving the future reward of inheriting the earth. Psalm 37 repeatedly draws the contrast between the present-day oppression of the righteous and the future reward of the righteous. As believers, we must look ahead to the future promises of God. Since those promises are true, we can live with Biblical gentleness and meekness today, even in the face of oppression from those who reject God. Psalm 37 contains great wisdom and comfort for difficulty and uncertain times. For today, read and meditate on Psalm 37.

1. Throughout the whole chapter, what future promises does God make to those who follow Him (for example: “the meek shall inherit the land”-vs. 11; “the Lord upholds the righteous”-vs. 17)?

2. Since evildoers will not last (vs. 2), what does verse 3 tell us we should do instead of worrying about the wicked?

3. Three times we are told to “fret not” (vs. 1, 7-8). Instead of worrying about those who do wrong, what does verse 7 advise us to do? What does following this advice look like in my own life today?

4. What is the Lord’s response to the wicked who try to rebel against Him (vs. 12-13, cf. Ps 2:1-6)?

5. As believers, we do struggle and fail. But what does the Lord do for the faithful one who falls (vs. 23-24)?

6. What is David’s observation about the righteous (vs. 25-26)? How can this encourage me as I trust God?

Tuesday

*Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth . . . And Moses cried to the LORD, "O God, please heal her—please."
Numbers 12:3, 13*

Moses was raised in Pharaoh's household, but one day, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave. Moses had the power and opportunity to retaliate against the Egyptian, and he responded by killing the Egyptian. At this point, he certainly did not show gentleness and meekness (power under control). When Pharaoh heard what happened, he wanted to kill Moses, but Moses fled to Midian. In Midian, Moses met a man named Reuel, and he married Reuel's daughter Zipporah.

Years later, as God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, God had developed the character quality of gentleness in Moses. Moses repeatedly faced the complaints and threats of Israel while in the wilderness, yet he rarely responded in anger at them (one exception to this is in Numbers 20 when Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it). Numbers 12 records one of the times where Moses faced opposition, but this time the opposition came from his own brother and sister. Aaron and Miriam complained about Moses' wife, and they complained against Moses' leadership when they said that the Lord had spoken through them as well as Moses. But verse 3 says that Moses was the meekest person on earth. In the face of their complaint, Moses could have responded with anger or he could have defended himself. When he was young, he responded with anger and killed the Egyptian. Now when he was old, he demonstrated gentleness and meekness. He trusted the Lord instead of retaliating, and the Lord confronted Aaron and Miriam and defended Moses. Miriam received leprosy because of her sin, but Moses responded by praying that God would heal her. The Lord answered Moses' prayer, and Miriam's leprosy was healed.

1. When someone opposes us, it is natural for us to want to defend ourselves and stand up to the other person. How can I follow Moses' example (and David's example in Psalm 37) and trust the Lord instead of responding the wrong way?

2. Despite what Miriam had said against him, Moses prayed that God would heal Miriam's leprosy. Am I willing to follow Moses' example and pray for those who criticize me or oppose me (cf. Matthew 5:44)? Who has stood against me? Specifically, how can I pray for them?

3. When have I failed to show gentleness to someone else? Am I willing to apologize to that person and seek their forgiveness?

Wednesday

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:21-22

The word for gentleness and meekness includes the idea of not exercising the authority and power that we have in order to get our own way. At times, that idea includes submitting to someone else. Instead of exercising our own authority and doing what we want, we submit to the authority of another. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) often uses the word for gentleness in this way by using it in the context of humbly submitting to God's will. Those Old Testament uses of gentleness imply the idea of humbly following God instead of trying to go our own way.

James 1:22 warns us against simply hearing God's Word without following what it says. But it does not tell us *not* to hear God's Word. We must first hear God's Word and allow it to change our thinking, and then we need to put it into practice and allow it to change the way that we live. James exhorted his readers to receive God's Word with "meekness," or gentleness. We should humbly submit to God's Word (which communicates the truth of the Gospel that can save us) instead of trying to go our own way. But receiving God's Word with meekness does not simply include hearing it. If we simply hear God's Word and acknowledge what it says, but it does not change our lives, then we have not submitted to it. We have not received it with meekness, and we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are doing well enough to know what God has said. But genuinely receiving God's Word with meekness and humility means that we are willing to submit to what God has said. When our will conflicts with what God's Word says, we give up our own will in order to follow God's will. We willingly live under God's authority instead of trying to be the authority in our lives. Only then can we be putting away filthiness and wickedness as verse 21 exhorts us to do.

1. Do I approach God's Word with humility? When I come to read and study God's Word, do I think I have everything figured out already, or do I come with a desire to learn and have God change my thinking?

2. Am I content with simply hearing God's Word (whether reading it on my own or hearing it preached in church) and then moving on with life (cf. James 1:23)? Or do I see the need for God's Word to change the way that I live?

3. We can speak generally of turning from sin and doing what's right. But in order for real change to take place, we must address specific sins in our lives. What specific sins of filthiness do I struggle with (James 1:21)? Looking throughout Scripture, what does God say about these particular sins?

Thursday

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

The Greek word for gentleness includes the idea of “power under control.” One who is gentle has the power and opportunity to abuse his position, but he chooses not to. This type of gentleness is especially necessary when someone else has sinned. It’s easy for us to want vengeance on someone who has sinned, especially if they have sinned against us personally or if we consider their sin to be grievous. But when someone else sins, God calls us as believers to try to help restore them. Our goal is not vengeance or seeing them face consequences for their sin. Our goal is repentance and restoration (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). But even as we seek to work with them and see them restored, we must do so with gentleness. We may have the power and opportunity to “give them what they deserve,” but God commands us to be gentle and humble. Keeping watch on ourselves in case we are tempted requires great humility. We must be humble enough to realize we may fall into sin in response to what someone else has done.

In a personal example, a child may sin against a parent. The parent certainly has authority over the child, but he is commanded to allow gentleness and humility to guide his discipline as he seeks to see the child restored. In a corporate example, church discipline is something that God commands churches to apply. So God has granted the church body authority to exercise discipline, but that authority must not be abused. The purpose of that discipline is restoration (cf. Matthew 18:15-17), so gentleness and humility must guide the church throughout the whole process of discipline.

1. When I am involved in talking with someone who sins, do I typically remember the need for gentleness as I deal with the problem? Practically, what should this gentleness look like in my interactions with this person?

2. What temptations do I personally face when I am dealing with someone else’s sin? These temptations could include falling into the same sin they committed, pride (“my sin isn’t *that* bad”), seeking vengeance or vindication for myself, or assuming the worst about them (including their motives). How can God help me to avoid falling into these temptations?

3. The law of Christ commands us to bear one another’s burdens. How can I help bear the burdens of others around me? As I seek to help them, will I also commit to praying for God to help them?

Friday

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:23-26

In both 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul warned Timothy about getting caught up in vain and useless discussions about myths, genealogies, and controversies (1 Timothy 1:3-7; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:14; cf. Titus 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5, where “arguments” refers to arguments that sound reasonable and correct but that use subtly deceptive reasoning and are actually false). It can be easy to get caught up in quarrels and arguments about such things, but Paul warned Timothy not to be quarrelsome. In Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* (written about 1270), Aquinas tried to answer the question “whether several angels can be at the same time in the same place?” He presents several logical-sounding arguments, but he is not studying something the Bible actually talks about or something that actually makes a difference in the Christian life. As Paul warned in 2 Timothy 2:23, these types of discussions only lead to quarrels, and they do more harm than good. A faithful servant of God should never go out looking for these types of useless quarrels.

But at times, we as believers do face these kinds of arguments from others. So how do we respond to them? When someone confronts us with false thinking or with useless arguments, we should be kind and be able to patiently teach truth, and we must correct others with gentleness. If someone is thinking wrongly, we do have the responsibility to help them think Biblically, so we should point out error and speak truth. But as we teach them, the goal is not to make them look foolish or to make ourselves look smart. The goal is for them to turn back to the truth of God’s Word and follow God faithfully. In order to reach this goal, we must speak to them with gentleness.

1. Do I sometimes get caught up in arguments and discussions that are not truly Biblically significant (even if they sound spiritual or important)? If so, how can these types of arguments distract me from what the Bible says is actually important?

2. Paul repeatedly warned Timothy against being caught up in useless discussions, but he also spent much time instructing Timothy in Biblical truth that is important. How can I become grounded in Biblical truth so I can discern what the Bible says is important and what is not important?

3. When I am in a discussion with someone else (whether they are bringing up “foolish controversies” or whether we are discussing something important), how can I show gentleness as I aim to lead them to truth?

Saturday

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

1 Peter 3:14-16

Much of 1 Peter addresses facing unjust suffering for faith in Christ. We should not fear those who oppose us for our faith, but we should honor Christ as holy and entrust ourselves to Him (cf. 1 Peter 4:19). We also should be prepared to defend our faith before others who question it. The word “reason” is the Greek word “logos,” which is often translated simply as word, but carries the connotation of a logic and reason. If someone asks us the logic and reasoning for our faith, we must be prepared to share the truth of God’s Word with them. The word “defense” is the Greek word “apologia,” from which we get our English word “apologetics.” Apologetics is not apologizing and saying we are sorry for our faith. Apologetics is giving a reasonable and logical defense of our faith based on the Word of God. In other words, the goal is not to give an emotional appeal, but a logical explanation of the Gospel that the Bible teaches. Someone may reject that message, but our message should be grounded in the truth of Scripture.

As we give that message, we must give it with gentleness and respect. When someone challenges our faith, it’s easy for us to get defensive. We don’t want them to think of us as foolish, and we don’t want them to win the discussion. So it is easy for us to drift into an argument and become more concerned with winning the argument than clearly sharing the Gospel and inviting someone to come to Christ. So we are called to give this reasonable defense of the faith with gentleness. *What* we say matters very much, but *how* we speak the truth is also important. Someone might initially reject the message that we share, but as they slander us and see how we live Biblically in response, they may eventually come to see the truth of the Gospel.

1. Although I may not be an expert in all Biblical things, we also should not be ignorant of our faith. How can I be better equipped to explain Biblical truth to others and share the Gospel with them?

2. When I talk about my faith with someone else, what is my goal? Do I want to win the discussion and have them think highly of me, or do I want them to see the truth of the Gospel and their own need for Christ?

3. Am I willing to acknowledge Christ as Lord and Master of my own life? If I am afraid of others opposing my faith, how can acknowledging Christ as Lord in my own heart and life help with this fear?
