

Strength Under Control  
Matthew 5:5  
12-7-2025

As we continue to the eighth character trait of the spirit filled life, Paul says the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness or meekness as the KJV translates it

Of all the virtues, this is probably the most misunderstood and least valued  
It grates against what the world tells us is important

**Values captured in the titles of two of author Robert Ringer's bestselling books, Winning Through Intimidation, and Looking Out for Number One.**

**Like the businessman who was leaving church after hearing the pastor speak on Matthew 5:5, the meek shall inherit the earth. He turned to his wife and said, All I've got to say is that if the meek are going to inherit the earth, they'd better become a lot more aggressive.**

In a world which values strength and assertiveness, power and control, traits such as meekness, gentleness, and humility are often seen more as vices than virtues  
Something to ridicule rather than emulate,  
The butt of bad jokes and offhand remarks because it conjures up images of weakness, timidity, and softness

**Like was captured some time back in one of the devotionals from Our Daily bread. It said, According to Bill Farmer's newspaper column, J. Upton Dickson was a fun-loving fellow who said he was writing a book entitled Cower Power. He also founded a group which went by the acronym, DOORMATS. It stood for Dependent Organization Of Really Meek And Timid Souls—if there are no objections. Their motto was, The meek shall inherit the earth—if that's okay with everybody. And their symbol was the yellow traffic light, whose message is, slow down and prepare to yield the right of way to others.**

Yet Jesus saw something there which the world misses which is why in Matthew 5:5 he said, **blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.**

Part of the reason for our misunderstanding and lack of appreciation for it, is simply that we don't have a very good English equivalent for the Greek word *praous*.  
It is variously translated as meekness, gentleness, humility, mildness

It's the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest.  
Because the gentle or meek person isn't focused on self, things like pride and ego, control and getting their own way, they are able to deal with others with patience and understanding rather than arrogance or harshness.

Gentleness and meekness are part of the fruit of the Spirit because they too describe our Lord, character traits he exhibited.

**In Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."**

In referring to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Matthew quoted the prophet Zechariah,

***"See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Matthew 21:5)***

**And in 2 Corinthians 10:1 Paul wrote, By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you**

Sadly, too often the world's values are brought into the church, even when they contradict God's word

**Like the pastor of a very large church in Dallas that told his congregation, we're tired of turning the other cheek. It's time we start pushing back.**

**Nate Pyle pastors a church outside of Indianapolis. He said he took a group of his men to a men's retreat and the entire focus was on being tough and manly rather than servants**

**Afterwards he pointed out the discrepancy saying, "In America, men are taught to climb the corporate ladder, conquer foes, and then celebrate their victories. But Jesus descended, denied himself, and died for others.**

**It makes me concerned about how far we've fallen when we let world and its politics start defining our values instead of Jesus.**

Blessed are the meek for they are the ones who will inherit the earth.

While many may give lip service to servant leadership, I hear and read far more about things like pastoral authority, executive pastors, and pastor as CEO than I do of shepherding and the care of souls.

**A while back I read an article by the pastor of one of the largest churches in America.**

**In it he said we should never refer to pastors as servants and shepherds anymore. Meekness and gentleness are too weak for those who lead. Instead, he said, they should be seen as CEO's, with the executive boardroom as his model. Because his time is so valuable, the senior pastor becomes a celebrity of sorts who only has meaningful contact with a select few on his leadership team who are the ones who then work with the general church membership.**

**Are we normalizing its values in place of Christ's?**

**How can you pastor people when you don't know or have any contact with them?**

**the word pastor itself comes from the Latin word which means shepherd.**

Jesus didn't spend his time in board meetings and getting close to the halls of power but on the dusty roads of Palestine among the people, often those on the bottom of society not the top, displaying humility and gentleness not exerting power and control.

While he invested 3 years training the 12 disciples, he never confined contact to his chosen few, but could be found interacting with just about anyone, eating in their homes, blessing their children, touching and healing the sick and outcast.

if we consider it a weakness, it only proves that we don't really understand what the fruit of the spirit which is meekness and gentleness really means.

In scripture meekness, gentleness, humility are not weaknesses, they are actually signs of strength. The motto, strong enough to be gentle captures a little of this.

The meek stand in sharp contrast to bullies who are really just using intimidation and force to cover up their insecurities.

It is the meek, Jesus said, who will inherit the earth. They are the ones who are strong enough in themselves and in their Lord that they don't have anything to prove or hide behind. They can be gentle and patient in their dealings with others because they don't have to always be right and have things their own way.

It's not the mouse which best captures this trait of meekness, but a well-trained war horse which one moment can be calm and controlled while the next it can selflessly charge into the thick of battle at his master's command.

A good definition of meekness is strength under control.

Consider the only two people in all of scripture who are called meek.

There is, of course, Jesus, as the verses I read a moment ago indicate.

The one who in John 2:13-16 walks into the temple, the center of his adversary's power, makes a whip and then proceeds to turn over the tables of the money changers and drive out the animals being sold there.

And who went to Gerasene, to the graveyard everyone in the area was afraid to go to because of the man living there among the tombs. The man possessed by a legion of demons and could break any chain used to try to hold him. Yet Jesus never even flinched, confronted the man and commanding the demons to leave.

Not exactly the picture of timidity and weakness we associate with being meek and gentle.

The only other person who was said to be meek is Moses.

**Numbers 12:3 says now the man Moses was very meek/humble, more than all the other people who were on the face of the earth**

Hard to reconcile him as weak when you read Exodus 5-11 as he confronted Pharaoh, perhaps the most powerful man of his day.

Repeatedly Moses demanded that Pharaoh let his people go and then called down Gods 10 plagues each time he was refused.

Over and over the Bible's accounts of Jesus and Moses reveal men of strength not weakness. Strength which was under control – men who were meek and gentle.

It was a meekness seen by their willingness for self-denial in order to accept Gods plan for their lives. they didn't need to lash out at others but knew there was a proper time and place for it

strength under control

**Aristotle referred to meekness and gentleness as the mean between the two extremes of rage and indifference.**

**For him, the elephant was the prime example. Tremendous strength yet gentle.**

**Plato described gentleness as a mighty and strong beast which can be tamed and fed by a man who learned to handle it**

**William Barclay said the best illustration is perhaps the watchdog who is bravely hostile to strangers yet gentle and friendly with those he is familiar with, that it knows and loves**

Thus, Jesus himself is referred to both as the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God  
Strength under control!

**One commentator likened it to the power of water which can be extremely destructive as we've seen in recent floods. But when focused and brought under control, can turn a waterwheel and grind wheat and turn large turbines to create electricity and give power to entire communities.**

In our lives, that's the virtue Paul refers to when he says the fruit of the Spirit is meekness  
It comes as we submit our lives and wills to the Lord, his control and guidance, his purposes and mission

The meek don't go running off on their own, determined to do great things, but rather submit to the spirit of God in them because as the fruit of the Spirit, it is not power under our own control but God's

We don't have to prove or impose ourselves, always have our way or be right. But as James said,

***We are to "get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and instead humbly/meekly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." (James 1:21)***

humility, gentleness, meekness along with a teachable spirit are essential or else we will only get in the way of his word planted in us and which can save us  
as with all the virtues listed, it too is to be displayed in our dealings with others

if we see someone caught up in some sin we aren't to attack and condemn, but Paul said in Galatians 6:1 we are to restore them gently, in meekness – watch our smugness and self-righteousness, go easy on others because none of us are above it all

**Or as Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:25, we are to correct others gently**

**AW Tozer pointed out that the meek person is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of their own inferiority. Rather in their moral life they may be as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but they have stopped being fooled about themselves. They have accepted God's estimate of their own life. They know they are as weak and helpless as God has declared them to be, but paradoxically, they know at the same time that in the sight of God they are more important than angels. In themselves nothing; in God everything. That is the meek persons motto, he wrote.**

**I read a story about the famous black American singer Marian Anderson. From the time she was 6, she was singing in her church choir and went on to be considered by many to be one of the greatest singers of her generation. Once in an interview, a reporter asked her to name the greatest moment of her life.**

- **She could have named the night that renowned conductor Arturo Toscanini announced that a voice like hers comes but once in 100 years.**
- **She could have referred to the time in 1955 when she became the first African American to sing at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.**
- **Or the following year when it was announced that her autobiography had become a best seller.**
- **Or in 1958 when she became a US delegate to the United Nations.**
- **She could have said it was the time she gave a private concert at the White House for president Roosevelt, King George VI, and Queen Elizabeth.**
- **Or it could have been when her hometown of Philadelphia awarded her the Bok Award as the person who had done the most for the city.**
- **Then there was the time in 1963 when she was awarded the coveted Presidential Medal of Freedom.**
- **She could have named 1977 when she was awarded the UN Peace Prize.**
- **And perhaps more than any of these, the reporter probably expected her to name the event for which she was best known. Easter Sunday, 1939 in Washington DC when she stood at the Lincoln Memorial and sang for a crowd of 75,000 people, which included most of the Cabinet members, all nine Supreme Court Justices, and most of the members of Congress.**

**A lifetime full of awards and accomplishments, she could have pointed to any of them. Yet to the great surprise of the reporter who asked, she didn't mention any of these. Instead, she said the greatest moment of her life was the day she went to her mother and told her she wouldn't have to take in washing anymore.**

**Many have said that the true greatness of Marian Anderson was not her extraordinary voice, but her gentle and meek spirit.**

Because the meek don't have anything to prove, they don't have to show off or puff out their chests or boast about their accomplishments or knowledge, or demand their own way and push others around to get it.

They know where their strength and value truly lie.

And because it is a trait of our Lord, Jesus it is the meek, who will inherit the earth

**Colossians 3:12** *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”* (Colossians 3:12)

**“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility/meekness that comes from wisdom.”** (James 3:13)

In other words, true wisdom will be seen not in the façade you wear or the words you hide behind, but through your life and the way you treat others.

**Because the fruit of the spirit is gentleness, Paul told Titus 3:2, we should be gentle/meek and show true humility to everyone.**

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness – the strength which comes from having such confidence in the Lord, dedication and submission to His will and His ways, that you can accept life and people when they don’t agree with you or do what you want.

It is the strength under control which comes from knowing that whatever may happen, you are secure in Him

It is the strength rooted in our devotion to God

Martin Lloyd Jones described meekness and gentleness this way,

**The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive...all that is gone. The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. He never talks to himself and says, You are having a hard time, how unkind these people are, not to understand you. He never thinks, How wonderful I really am, if only other people gave me a chance. Self pity! What hours and years we waste on this! But the man who has become meek, has finished with all that. To be meek in other words, means that you have finished with yourself altogether, and you’ve come to see that you have no rights or desserts at all. The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do. That, it seems to me, is its essential quality.**

Gentleness, strength under control

As Jesus demonstrated when he went to the cross

All the power of heaven at his disposal, yet he went willingly to the cross not just in obedience to God, but out of love for you and me.

**“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”** (1 Timothy 6:11–12)

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness, blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth