

When I say the word meek, what biblical image comes to your mind? Is it a strong person or a weak person? Perhaps it would be Mary the mother of Jesus who is described in song as meek and mild. Or maybe you think of John the Beloved disciple who always stayed in the background. What about boisterous Paul, or even Moses the one who stood up to Pharaoh and led the Israelites out of slavery.

If you are like me, Paul and Moses are not 2 people who come to mind when I think of meekness; but the bible describes them both as being meek persons. In looking at this, I now understand how the bible is accurate and I was the one with the mistaken notion. You see for a long time, I thought of a meek person as a weak person more like the first two mentioned: people who are mild and introverted.

But I have come to understand the term meekness in a much better light than when I was young. When a person is described as meek, it has nothing to do with how loud and outgoing a person is or isn't. It actually has to do with being humble and knowing who you are and whose you are. As such, the strength of meekness is hidden to many because they perceive it as a spineless submissiveness. But careful examination of meek biblical characters like Paul, Moses, Mary and even Jesus, it shows that they were submissive not because they were spineless, but actually because they were strong.

Meekness is one of the 9 fruits of the spirit that the Christian life is to include. So understanding this concept, which may be closer to humility and humbleness than we realize, will help us to see how we can desire to work at this fruit of the Spirit. When a person is meek, it does not mean we are weak. It may mean we know our strengths and weaknesses and use them as God guides, leads and desires.

Again note, meekness knows strengths and weaknesses within ourselves and humbly we learn to rely on God to help make a way or work for us to have good things happen. Think of Moses. Moses had a weakness. Moses' stuttered.

Now God says to Moses, you are going to speak to Pharaoh on my behalf.

Moses' reacts: wait God. I cannot do that part of the plan. Yet God makes a way by using Aaron as primary spokesperson. Recognize, Moses had a willing heart and he knew that God would fight for him. So they move forward with Moses' leadership, and in the end, God's presence and guidance was all that mattered.

Similarly we see it in today's text as well. Mary the Mother of Jesus, is often described as meek and mild. Do not let the mild fool you when considering the strength of the meekness. It is seen clearly in our text today. There is Mary minding her own business, being a good faithful Jewish girl, when as our text indicates, the angel Gabriel pops in. "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

No kidding she would be startled and troubled by this turn of events. I mean, Mary is a teenage girl. She's not the 30 year old stately looking woman we see in most nativity scenes. Yet here she is visited by an Angel who tells her that she is being entrusted with carrying the Messiah. Rev. Rob Woodrum, in writing a sermon about Mary had an interesting notation about Mary.

He writes: *I am amazed at God's trust of Mary who was basically a teenager. I've had teenage daughters. I had trouble trusting my teenage girl with an IPOD, much less entrusting the Messiah to her! Yet God trusts Mary. And God CAN trust her, because it's God's grace which enables her to do this, even though Mary is someone the world would consider unqualified to do this.*

If you look at our text, one can see how Mary's response is a meek and humble one. After being told she is favored by God, and will conceive and give birth to the Messiah, we read an important notation about how this meekness works out. Notice Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

Now, to really notice the meekness factor one must remember the other time in our Bibles when the Angel Gabriel came with a message to a servant of God.

Remember how in a similar way Gabriel went to Zachariah, to tell him about his wife becoming pregnant in their old age with John the Baptist. Zechariah, like Mary, questions the angel, but there is a distinct difference.

Zachariah asks, "How can I know?" Mary says "How will this be?" Notice Zechariah is basically ask him, 'can I trust you?' Mary on the other hand seems to be saying, 'Ok, I get what you're saying and all -- but how?' Really, the difference between their responses is the difference between being incredulous and inquisitive. Mary states that she believes it will be. She is not doubting what the angel says, she's just trying to understand the process.

Gabriel tells her this will be something the Holy Spirit does miraculously. God will form Himself as an embryo apart from the normal process. The Messiah will be born. As incredulous as that sounds, Mary in humility and meekness accepts that God will make a way. Again look at Mary's response to all this craziness.

<sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." What a wonderful response that shows how meekness is not weakness. It truly is trusting God to make a way.

The same needs to occur for us in our days and times. The meekness God desires us to have and seek after is one where we humble ourselves and allow God to make a way. We humble ourselves to remember who we are and whose we are. Max Lucado tells a story of how this worked for one individual. John Cole came home to find his wife upstairs trying to console his son Jeff, who once again had been bullied by the Bryan boys who threatened to take Jeff's bike after school if he did not pay them a dollar. Consoling his son, John told Jeff this was not right, tried to make him feel better and said they would talk about what to do after dinner.

After dinner, John, his wife, and Jeff sat on the couch, where John pulled out the family bible, and turned to a picture there of Moses standing near the edge of a big sea, hair being blown back, and black clouds in the sky and an army of chariots racing toward him. The soldiers looked mean and the people looked

afraid, yet Moses looked calm. He held his staff to the heavens. The caption under the picture said: "Remain calm, the Lord will fight for you!"

*Who do you think said those words Jeff,* his dad asked. "Moses," Jeff replied.

*You are right. Do you think he was afraid?* "I would have been with all those bad guys coming," said Jeff. Mom spoke up, "They look trapped." That is how I felt today Dad. I felt trapped.

The father closed the bible and said, *I know son. That is why we are going to do what Moses did. We are going to ask God to take over, to pick up the fight for you.* Later that night, after Jeff had gone to bed, John spent an hour with his bible reading the promises and praying for the situation.

The next morning, Jeff got to breakfast to find a note from his dad. *"The Lord will fight for you. Trust God to care for you."* As Jeff rode his bike to school that day, there was a problem on the one street so he had to detour to another street. As Jeff rounded the next block, he heard a crash and a thud. He looked and there by a parked car was a fallen boy groaning in pain. It was the youngest Bryan boy, Billy. "I wasn't looking," moaned Billy. I didn't see that car and rode right into it." "Stay here and I will get some help," Jeff said.

Getting up to go, Jeff's dad came running over. *"I was following you just in case something happened."* The next minutes were a blur of activity, as first aid was applied. When Billy who had been crying so hard looked up to see who had helped, he said, "Wait a minute. You're Jeff Cole. Jeff didn't say anything.

"We made you pay a dollar yesterday for use of your bike." Jeff still didn't say anything. But you helped me anyway? Jeff's mom who had arrived leaned over to and whispered to Jeff. Things will be better now. Then to John

Cole she whispered. "Wow, God did it again. What a different way to help Jeff."

The meekness that God desires us to have is that which allows us to humble ourselves. We humble ourselves knowing who we are and whose we are. May we seek to understand the role of meekness as we live for God and allow God to work for us.