

A KINDER AND GENTLER FAITH AGAINST THE GRAIN - Part 4 Dan Burrell

Well good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you and because this is my first time speaking in 2021 – Happy New Year to everyone! It is good to see everyone in church this morning on this beautiful winter day. I thought I would give you a couple of quick updates before we get into our series this morning.

So first of all I want to address what some of you may think of as an elephant in the room. Two weeks ago last Thursday I had a treatment on my back as I had been having some lower back pain for quite some time. After that I was driving to the office and the next thing I knew I was feeling a heaviness in my chest, I started having shortness of breath, and then I immediately broke into the most incredible perspiration I have ever experienced. Now I sweat pretty heavily on my best day, but this was entirely different in that I was really drenched.

I hit my phone on the dashboard and called Julie and said, *‘I don’t know what is going on with me but I don’t think it is good.’* So I drove myself over to Huntersville Novant Hospital off of Exit 25 which wasn’t far away, and within fifteen minutes they told me that I was having a heart attack. And I had always thought that guys in their 50s didn’t have heart attacks; so they just didn’t know what they were saying.

But thirty-one minutes later I had a new piece of platinum hardware in the form of a stent to open up four blockages in my heart, and I was in ICU. So that was certainly an unexpected start to 2021, and in spite of all of those predictions of how much better 2021 was going to be than 2020 it just really hasn’t been working out the way I had anticipated it would. But just to reassure you I am doing quite well. I am on eleven different medications which has left me just a tad hazy to which you are probably thinking, *‘Hazier than usual?’* So anything I say this morning that may seem off the wall or whatever, we are going to blame it on the medication this week, all right?

But I am feeling well and my wife has me on a very strict regimen and a very short leash just until I get back on top of things. I am truly grateful to the Lord, and I am truly grateful to the fine professionals at Novant Hospital. I am not one for public endorsements, but if I had to do it all over again I would do it with those folks at Novant because they were excellent. I know several of you work at that hospital system and I do commend them for the fine work that they did because they kept it from being a lot more serious than it had the potential to be.

By the way another thing is this. I am fine, I am good, I have high energy on my lowest day. If you treat me like an invalid I am going to unleash a series of imprecatory prayers on you folks like you have never seen. Okay? So please do not treat me like an invalid. I do appreciate your concern, and I always appreciate your prayers, but I am good. And that is part of the stubbornness I am going to be preaching about in just a moment. But again I do appreciate your concern and prayers, and I want you to know that I have not had a diet A&W root beer in sixteen days. So if I am a little crabby that is why. I hadn’t realized how high in sodium it was, and let’s just say that I had a problem

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in that department with about two liters a day of diet A&W root beer. But I am off of it now and A&W stock is dropping dramatically just because I am no longer drinking it.

The second thing I want to mention is I hope you will plan next Sunday night to join us at 5 o'clock as we are going to have a night of prayer here. If you have never been to a night of prayer this would be a great opportunity for you to show up because this is one of those times where people are feeling disconnected right now. 2020 was a long year and 2021 is showing signs of being even longer. But there is nothing that will reconnect us to the important things in our life and our community more than prayer.

So we are going to have one hour of prayer. I want to tell you what it is not going to be. There is not going to be a bunch of music. There is not going to be a sermon. What it is going to be is actually an hour of prayer. Maybe you don't like to pray out loud. Great, come on because you don't have to pray out loud. You can if you want to and if you don't want to you do not have to. Maybe you feel uncomfortable being close to people. There will be plenty of room for social distancing because that remains a priority for us.

Maybe you don't know what to pray for so we are going to have four very simple categories to pray for. And we are going to guide through those. In other words every impediment that you might feel has already been thought of, it has been set up to cover those. And we think that this is going to be an important night, because I am sure all of us can agree that in times like this, such as this being an economic time, or it being a political time, or a health time, whatever it is I think we can all agree that now is a great time for prayer because these are challenging days. I haven't experienced anything like this in my lifetime so I think coming together as a church will be a great opportunity. I will be here and I hope you will be as well as we just will spend an hour seeking the Lord and coming together as a church family. I think it will be great for our unity and for spirit in our hearts.

And then the last thing is this, I am going to ask you specifically, especially this week, to be praying for our elders. Every year we go away for a week, we spend time together, we pray and we plan. Last year we went away and when we came back Covid hit which was kind of crazy. So our elders are going to try again this year and we leave this afternoon to spend some time together as the elder team. Our elders have had some unusual challenges both on a personal level and in the leadership of the church over the last year, so I think this is a particularly important elder retreat for us. So if you would please just remember to pray for us each day and it will be really appreciated.

Okay, we are going to be back in Matthew Chapter 5 this morning. I got so excited about this series when we started talking about it last fall. I have anticipated this series so much, and today we are on the second of The Beatitudes and that is found in verse 5. ***"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."***

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Now when we were starting to think about this series, originally Ben and I were going to alternate weeks and then this one would have fallen to Ben. But the way it worked out I got this one so now I am thinking the Lord may have been in this because meekness is one of those things I would say that I am not particularly known for. I am a type A and a firstborn. I am from Missouri and we are known for our stubbornness. I am the older guy on staff, so I am the one with a lot of strong opinions about things. So when the Lord laid me on my back with the heart attack when I was supposed to preach the next week I thought it was still going to work out perfectly that I would miss this one because we had planned to go alternate weeks. But Ben basically told me he was going to preach my week and then we would go back to our regular schedule and that meant I was going to have to preach on meekness.

And I think perhaps the Lord wanted that to happen. I think the Lord wanted me to be reminded of some things when we talk about meekness. So the bottom line is this, for a lot of people and particularly for a lot of dudes, when we say the word 'meek' to them they think 'weak.' They think this is not a quality that a lot of guys aspire to. None of us when we hold our sons for the first time and we look into their little cherubic faces says, '*Man, I hope you grow up to be very, very meek.*' No, we don't do that. The connotation, you know if we were to paraphrase this verse, I think a lot of people would say, '*Well, blessed are the wimps for they shall be trampled upon.*'

Now we may not say that out loud, but in our heads somewhere there is this correlation, this connotation that is coming into our lexicons, where we think of meekness as weakness, maybe a little feminine, or gentle, or weak willed, or compliant, or soft spoken, or even spineless. And yet when you study the word, when you go into the etymology of the Greek word here, this is actually a really exciting, very, very powerful, colorful, even a vivid word, and when we understand it, it will help us want to embrace it.

It is really the kind of attribute that Jesus was saying as He was preaching to the multitude that day on a hill outside of Galilee when He said He wanted them to go against the grain. He didn't want them to be like everyone else. And He definitely did not want them to be like the Pharisees. He didn't want them to be like all of the religious role models that they had been watching their entire lives. He didn't want them to be the pious, outwardly rigid, self-righteous, pompous, arrogant, know-it-all, self-assured kind of person that walked around with their values on one shoulder and their opinions on the other shoulder telling everyone the way they should live. And Jesus did not want them to be that way. His promise for them was that they should be meek and they would inherit the earth.

So I was looking at this and I was thinking if the Lord really wants us to go against the grain, if He wants us to not blend in like everyone else, if He wants us to show attributes that we are not naturally inclined to, I am going to need to understand some more about this. Because I have to tell you that there is a lot in me today as a man, as a firstborn, as a dude from Missouri, as an American, that says, '*Meekness is*

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weakness, and I just don't want that quality. I don't want to be tread upon. I don't want to be put upon. I want people to know what I am about, and where I am going. So I had to unpack it.

I looked at the Greek word that we have here, and it is a Greek word called *práos*. And here is what it means, and this didn't help me a lot, but it means, 'mildness of disposition' or 'gentleness of spirit.' It means mildness of disposition or a gentleness of spirit. So I thought, let's look at some ways this word, *práos*, has been used in contemporary literature of that time, or how did other writers who were extra biblical writers, use it and in what context, and maybe that would help me understand it better.

So I found several examples of Greek literature where it was used. Indeed this started fully orbiting it out so I could kind of see what it meant. For instance in one case it was used as a wild stallion that was tamed, or brought under control, as in broken. Now I can relate to that growing up in the Midwest because I knew of people breaking their horses there. Certainly the most difficult to break would be a stallion that is filled with testosterone. So to break a stallion and bring it under control would be a big deal.

And then there was another time it was used as words that soothe strong emotion. Have you ever know someone who could kind of do that? In fact there is a phrase people use that says, *'They are capable of pouring oil upon the water.'* And we know if we pour oil on water it kind of weighs it down. And some people have the ability to walk into something really dynamic, maybe a confrontation of some sort, and they just know the right words to say to calm down the atmosphere, or the water, so to speak. In political history maybe you remember that Ronald Reagan had this way of being able to walk into something, be like a grandpa and say something like, *'Now wait a minute, let's just settle down and think about this.'* And Reagan was always strong and in charge, but he had this ability to calm things down.

Another way the Greek word for meekness was used was as ointment that salves a wound. And we love that, right? Maybe you have gone out berry picking and got pretty scratched up. And you know there was always a difference between how my mom handled that and how my dad handled it. How many of you are old enough to remember mercurochrome, or iodine, that red stuff that was like pouring raw alcohol on something? But if I came in and I had scratches my dad would say, *'Where is the iodine? Let's get this boy all fixed up.'* And boy did that sting when he put it on my scratches.

But if you were a child of the 60s and 70s you probably remember Bactine. And the ads for Bactine said: *'Bactine has no sting and no stain.'* So mom would take off the little green top of the Bactine bottle and she would put it on the scratches and it would actually feel gentle and good. That was also actually the meaning of the Greek word *práos*, something that can soothe an open sore or wound.

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Another meaning was used by Plato and I thought it was kind of interesting. He used this word when he was describing a physician taking care of a child. We kind of think of a benevolent old pediatrician who sits down by a child and says, '*Now this may sting just for a little bit but it is going to make you so much better.*' And this is kind of the idea for that use of the word.

And then finally the Greek word is used to mean someone who treats others simply with tact, or dignity, or respect. This was more of a general way in which it was used in the literature, but it was also a way that was kind of reassuring. Don't we all like to be treated with tact, dignity and respect? Don't we like it when someone is not talking down to us? Don't we like it when we don't have to keep saying to ourselves that we know this person is a jerk but we still need to hear what they are saying? Don't we like it when we can talk to someone and they use their words carefully so that they get their point across without ticking us off? So those are the kind of ways that we see the word *práos*, or the word translated here in English as 'meek,' used in contemporary literature.

Meekness toward God then, is a disposition of spirit in which we are willing to accept His dealings as the man in charge, as the deity in charge, with us as good. In other words it is God working for our good and His glory. And when we are meek and we understand that, we do so without disputing or resisting. There is an idea here of constraint and submission. Sometimes when we are being dealt with by God we may be lacking in understanding, or frustrated that we are not getting our way, or we are confused, or even that we just flat out disagree with it.

'God, I don't like what that I am going through. I don't like the way you are working in my life or in the world right now. I don't like what you are permitting. I don't like who you have put in charge. I don't like the conditions in which I find myself at this moment.' But meekness means having an attitude or a posture that results in an internal spirit that says, '*I'm going to trust God.*' That is meekness.

In the Old Testament the meek were those who were wholly relying on God rather than on their own strength. And they were doing that often in allowing God to do what He was doing as they endured injustice. For instance, it could rightly be said that Job who lost his riches, his family, his friends and his position demonstrated meekness when he said, "***The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.***" He didn't pitch a fit. He didn't say, '*God has forgotten me.*' He didn't say, '*I give up.*' He didn't say, '*Well, I am just going to curse God and die.*' He didn't say all the things that many of us might have been internally tempted to say. Instead he said, '*Even with my last breath I will say this – I trust God. I was naked when I arrived, and I will be naked when I leave. Everything I have was from God whether it was good or bad; I trust Him.*' "***Blessed be the name of the Lord.***"

That is biblical meekness. We are going to see some other examples of it this morning before we are done, but I just think perhaps that one is the primary one because

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sometimes our meekness has to be turned toward evil or evil people. And when we do that it means knowing that God is sometimes even permitting the injuries they inflict and that He is using them to purify His called out ones. And that ultimately He is going to deliver us, His church, His family, His body, during His time and at His time.

We see that In Isaiah Chapter 41 when He was promising Israel that. And we see that in Luke Chapter 18 whenever they are talking of the future church. But the bottom line is this – gentleness or meekness is the opposite of self-assuredness and self-interest. And it stems from a complete trust in God’s goodness and authority that He is in control over the situation. So the meek person is one who is not occupied with self, but he is occupied with God. He is not thinking in terms of how this impacts me, but he is thinking in terms of what God is doing in me, through me, and around me.

Folks, if we are going to be meek then let’s make sure we understand this, because it is not natural; it is supernatural. It is not the posture of the human spirit; it is the consequence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is how we achieve meekness. That is how we go against the grain. That is how we survive the tumultuous circumstances of life in general. And by the way that may be how we survive the years like 2020 and 2021. There has to be a people who are called and controlled by the Holy Spirit who, regardless of injustice, regardless of turmoil, regardless of confusion, are able to say in the midst of all that a broken world can throw our direction say, *‘I am at peace with God.’*

Wow, I have to tell you that is a tall order. That is a tall order. And I have to tell you I want to be a role model for this. I am a pastor, right? I have been a believer for a long, long time. I have lived more than half a century, but I have to tell you if I watch too much news, if I engage in too much social media, if I see, listen to and think upon all the things that are broken and going wrong in our culture and in our world at every level today, I will lose my meekness, and my mind.

To be honest with you I think maybe that is a little bit of what impacted me a couple of weeks ago, because it causes stress. We want control, we want things to be right, we want to fix that which is broken, we want to solve problems, we want to resist the things that we know are causing pain and injustice in a broken world, we want to do those things, like we are in control. But ultimately, here is what Jesus was saying, *‘Calm down, God is at work. He has a plan and you don’t know the entire plan, and quite frankly, Dan, it is not about you. It is about God completing His work in His creation over all history, so that He will be glorified. And when He is glorified that will be good for you.’*

So when we think of those things, meekness can be the byproduct. The common denominator of many of the definitions is this – meekness is the image of strength under control. It is not weakness; it is not passive. It is not surrender. All of those are words

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that speak of giving up. But rather biblical meekness is more than that because it is intentional, it is difficult, and it requires initiative on our part.

I am from the country and you will have to excuse me because I know most people's dogs are like their child. But I did not grow up that way. Our dogs were never allowed in the house. Our dogs had a purpose and that was to keep the coyotes and the raccoons away from the chickens. That is why we had dogs and they weren't members of the family; they were useful tools. Now again, today I have a dog and he lives in my house and he sleeps on my daughter's bed. I get those kinds of dogs, but the dogs I grew up were not like that. And our dogs often were always looking at ways to submit to us.

Do you know what a big old mutt would do if you walked up and yelled 'hey' to them what they would do? They would usually roll over and show their belly. Have you ever seen a dog do that? That is usually a sign of a dog that has been whipped at some point. And again, please understand that I am in no way advocating that in terms of that being right for animals. But on the farm many dogs were that way. You could have this big old dog that was very strong and powerful, and if you walked outside and barked at him, he would flip over on his back and show his belly as a sign of submission. Sometimes they would even tinkle on themselves a little. They were trying to say that they knew we were the boss and they were submissive.

And sometimes when we think of meekness we kind of think that is what God wants us to do. He wants us to roll over and show our belly. He wants us to be so afraid that we will be completely submissive. But no, that is not it. Instead it is the roaring lion who respects the authority of his creator, who sits but you know they are sitting out of obedience. They are submitting their will. They have power, they have strength and they could tear the lion trainer apart, but instead they choose to take the strength they have and yield it to be under control.

Saint Francis de Sales said this: *"Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing so gentle as real strength."* Jesus was the epitome of meekness. And He possessed the qualities and the restraint that we see in His Word. He even described Himself as meek in Matthew Chapter 11. He says this: ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul."***

Now what was the promise He said if you will be meek? He said you will inherit the earth. And people ask what does it mean to inherit the earth? Well, it can mean a couple of things, and Bible scholars go back and forth on it, but it can mean this - self-control today can lead to victories during this lifetime. In other words if you learn to control yourself in these areas now God will give you opportunities. And that is certainly a logical conclusion and we can look into Scripture and find examples of that.

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But it also may mean that self-control today will lead to privileges in the future, or in His kingdom eventually. When He comes and sits up His earthly kingdom after this life is over at that point maybe there will be privileges for those who have exercised self-restraint in this life. But whichever of those is true we know it is true that Scripture teaches us right now we need to understand that sometimes we are going to be called to endure current suffering.

If you read The Beatitudes and drop down to verse 12 you will see that at the end of all these examples that Jesus gives, like “***Blessed are***” the ones who do this and that, by the way you will be persecuted for His names sake. You will be persecuted because you pursue righteousness. You are going to experience hard times when you live against the grain because it will cause conflicts. It is going to result in persecution. It is going to rub people the wrong way. People are going to call you weak, or passive, or insincere. There is a price for living against the grain. But what Jesus is saying is that it is going to be worth it in the end. In the future, whether in this lifetime or in the life to come, when you obey God’s plans, blessings follow obedience. So pay the price, and go against the flow. Be different and stand against the grain.

Understand that we need to keep in mind that we as believers, as Christians, are to be self-controlled. That is why the Scripture says, “***For the love of Christ constrains us,***” which speaks of holding back. But do you understand for the believer that self-control really doesn’t mean self-control, rather it means divinely controlled, because we are not our own. We are the slaves, the bond servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. So when you and I are in a position where we want our own way, we are going to get somebody told, we are going to solve the problem, we are going to stand up for what is right, when we get in those positions we have to understand that our ability to do so biblically is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And that is not our natural posture.

I want to read Psalms 37 real quickly to you because even in the Old Testament we see these examples of how patience and meekness is a virtue. Look what it says beginning in verse 7 of Psalms 37: “***Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.***”

David in the Old Testament, Paul in the New Testament and all throughout Scripture we see the emphasis is this – you are going to get ticked off, you are going to see injustice, you are going to ask the question ‘*why do the wicked prosper,*’ you are going to ask ‘*why do not the righteous flourish,*’ but in the end we have to step back and let God be God in our lives. And in doing so we prepare ourselves well for what He wants to complete.

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So very quickly, what should meekness look like in your life and in my life? Let me give you four things to think about. Number one – meekness is the power to absorb adversity and criticism without retaliating. Meekness is the power to absorb adversity and criticism without retaliating. I have to tell you that is a tough one. *‘I don’t get mad; I get ____.’ Audience responds ‘even.’* See, you all know it too, don’t you? *Laughter.* It is not just me, is it?

I mean isn’t that kind of a characteristic of our culture today though? Our entire nation was founded on the idea of *‘don’t tread on me,’* right? We are citizens of Heaven before we are citizens of anywhere else, so in a spiritual sense having the power to absorb difficult times, injustice, adversity, and criticism without becoming like the people that are doing the injustices and criticizing us is a difficult challenge and calling, but it is the essence of biblical meekness.

Here is the second one – meekness combines wisdom and a gentle spirit to produce gentleness, patience and reasonableness. James to me is a very pastoral book that is both sharp and wise; it is both pointed and comforting. Look at what James Chapter 3 says in verse 13: **“Who is wise and understanding among you?”** Who is the person that you would say about them: *‘This guy is wise and full of wisdom.’* Or *‘She is the person who walks in wisdom.’* **“By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”**

So wisdom produces meekness and meekness goes hand in hand with wisdom. Verse 17 says this: **“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”** Wow, that is a list of fine qualities, isn’t it? And do you know what has to happen if we are going to have those qualities? We are going to have to shut up and listen. We are going to have to be still and confident in what God is doing.

Number three – meekness pursues truth and is willing to both state it and submit to it. And here is where the shift comes in my explanation. Because being meek does not mean you ignore truth, being meek does not mean you suppress truth, being meek does not mean you accept a lie. Being meek pursues truth, points it out, makes sure that everybody knows what is at stake, and then leaves the results up to God, leaves the consequences up to God. And sometimes those consequences are going to fall on us.

And Jesus had this happen. He never compromised who He was. He never denied that He was the Son of God. He never denied that He was sent by God to pay for the sins of the world. He never denied any of the accusations that were made of Him that were true. But instead what He did was He just re-stated it, He didn’t threaten them, He didn’t retaliate, He just gave them the facts for them to do what they wanted with them. And you know what they did to Him. They killed Him. They murdered Him. But you see that wasn’t the end of the story and Jesus knew that. And God knows that for each of us as well.

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Galatians Chapter 6 talks about how even in the church we relate to each other whenever lies and truth are at stake. It says this in verse 1: ***“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression (or any sin), you who are spiritual should,”*** (you who are meek, you who are thinking biblically, and you who are committed to truth – what should you do? ***“Restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”*** Remember the word gentleness and meekness go hand in hand. Then it goes on to say: ***“Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”***

Do you see the humility in that? Even in confronting fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who have fallen into sin, we are to do so with gentleness and with humility. We state the truth, we speak it simply, and then let God sort out the details. It doesn't mean that we are silent; no, we speak up, but we are as concerned about our own tendency to sin as we are about the other brother who has sinned. So this is important. Galatians Chapter 6 and verse 2 says: ***“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*** In other words our idea ought to be that back and forth we are together trying, pursuing to reach truth and live it, to hold others accountable to it, but to also hold ourselves accountable to it.

The fourth thing is this – meekness is the posture of someone who truly trusts in God. Meekness is the posture of someone, and hopefully that is us, who at the end of the day can be found consistently just trusting God. It means we have such confidence in God that we are willing to trust Him, not only with the circumstances, but with the outcome. We assign to Him our anxieties, our frustrations, our plans, our relationships, our jobs, and our health, and we are willing to wait patiently for the Lord to complete what He is doing. We trust His timing, we rest in His power, we lean into His grace and we are aware that this is about His glory and goodness, not our personal comfort.

So let me give you some practical applications and I am finished. Number one – meekness will allow us to be in the minority whether we are speaking politically, socially, professionally or culturally; to be in the minority without engaging in hateful dialogue. I am going to put the rubber on the road right now. And this isn't about politics; this is about living out your faith. Whatever happens in Washington DC does not happen apart from God's sovereign design and plan, even if it is something that we would do differently if we were in charge.

I didn't like what was going on in Washington the last four years. I will not like it in the next four years. But I also didn't like it the last eight years, twelve years, sixteen years, twenty years, twenty four years, twenty eight years, and so on. And I won't like it moving forward as well because we are humans and we are sinful. And by the way this should not come as a shock to us if we have read the book of Revelations, if we understand human nature, and if we have read Romans Chapter 1. It should not come as a shock to us that things are going to get worse before they ever get better.

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What makes us think that we are special, that while we are alive things are going to be really good, really easy, and really convenient? What makes us think that we are never going to have to suffer for our faith? What makes us think that we are never going to know anything bad because we love Jesus? That it is just the other generations that have to do that, the ones before us and the ones after us because our generation is special. No, we are not! And we have never really been called up to suffer, do maybe this is our turn.

And so maybe our focus ought to be, *'What will we do to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ'* which is what Paul said to young Timothy. Will we stand? You see legislation does not require me to violate my obedience to God's Word. It may result in some consequences, but they can't make me bow my knee to Baal. And there have been generations of believers before us who were willing with meekness to submit to the consequences of standing up for righteousness. And we don't have to pick up a sword, we don't have to do something illegal, we just have to obey God. We respond to submission to the highest authority and the highest authority is God.

Secondly – meekness means we will not respond in kind when others are hateful. We don't double down. When someone hits us, excuse me for paraphrasing a well-known leader, *'we don't hit them back twice as hard.'* That is not biblical. Now what is biblical? Let me think – what was that verse about turning the other cheek. I will tell you right now some people are doing the 'but' in their head right now. But *'what if?'* But *'they did.'* But *'how can?'* I don't see any *'but if, but when, but they,'* in Scripture. The Bible says we are standing for righteousness, and we are not to compromise and not to retaliate. So sometimes we are going to be abused. They are going to say unkind things about us. Life isn't fair. The devil plays dirty, but make no mistake the battle has already been won and we are just waiting.

Number three – meekness allows us to find joy and peace in the midst of personal offenses and still express righteous anger when others are treated unjustly. I wish I had time to go into this. An example of this is when Jesus was clearing out the money changers. An example is whenever He said to the Pharisees, *'You all are a bunch of dogs and hypocrites. You should be ashamed of yourselves.'* See Jesus never compromised standing up for injustice, for those who were being treated unjustly and against injustice; but He didn't defend Himself.

And so meekness allows us to say, *'this isn't right.'* This allows us to speak up for the unborn. This allows us to stand for those who are being persecuted, just not for ourselves. This stands against unholy wars, this stands against evil ideology, this stands against injustice in all of its forms, but it does so in a controlled way. Not in a violent way, not in an evil way, and not in a retaliatory way.

Finally – meekness refuses to express entitlement or expect privilege, but instead it demonstrates humility and servanthood. And we live in a society today that says, *'Give*

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me my rights. Make it my way. I deserve to be comfortable. I should be in first place. I should not know despair. I should not know inconvenience. I should.... I should.... I should.... ' And that is just not biblical. I am not entitled to anything except hell quite frankly. If I got what I deserved I would already be there. Everything I have that is good and comfortable and wonderful is a gift from God. And when the weight of that fully rests on me it encourages me to act in humility and servanthood.

So to be very specific this means some of us ought to withdraw from social media until we can regain self-control. *I did it.* It means we need to reduce the amount of news we consume until we can digest it with less stress and anxiety. *I did it.* It means we might need to avoid certain topics of conversation. *I am doing it.* It means we might dial back our personal assertiveness when defending ourselves and dial up our assertiveness when we are defending others. *I am going to do my best.*

Maybe it means we offer grace rather than justice.

Maybe it means we forgive rather than cling.

Maybe we refuse to be offended when nonbelievers treat us the way that nonbelievers often treat believers.

Maybe it means returning good for evil.

Maybe it means going out of my way to prefer others.

Maybe it means considering my words carefully before I speak or write them.

Maybe it means taking a breath and refusing to respond.

Maybe it is not being goaded into anger.

Maybe it means not joining the mob.

Maybe it means not seeking power by any means necessary.

Maybe it means using my influence more than I demand personal satisfaction.

Maybe it means accepting personal injustices as an opportunity to demonstrate Christlikeness.

Maybe it means not compromising my values so that I can exercise control.

Maybe it means listening to the hardest, most difficult things that people are saying whenever I want to shout back my own opinions the most.

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Maybe instead of inciting I should be calming.

Maybe instead of wounding I should be healing.

Maybe I should re-appreciate tact and dignity and respect and compassion because “***Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.***”

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.