

Happy Are The Gentle

GEORGE W. BUSH, senior, campaigned for president of the United States on the slogan of a kinder and gentler society. It sounded like a theme from the Sermon on the Mount. He lost. He lost because few really identified with the slogan and what he stood for. To be kind and gentle sounds like a wonderful trait that many would like to experience from others. American businesses spend millions of dollars every year training their employees to be kinder and gentler towards others for the sake of productivity, but yet it is not a characteristic many really want to possess. Jesus' words seem nice, but most respond, "So what!"

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Matt. 5:5 (NASB)

NOT JESUS' IDEA. I wonder how the people reacted when Jesus spoke the third beatitude (Matt 5:5). I wonder if they thought, "This is desirable behavior for others; maybe I should act that way." I wonder if anyone thought Jesus was a nice, loving and considerate guy who had a wonderful heart for others. I wonder what they thought?

Maybe they wanted to think Jesus did not mean what he was saying. Some may say it means, "Blessed are the meek. . ." because that is how my Bible reads. That is closer to the meaning. It can be difficult to translate from one language into another. A common misunderstanding is that gentle means humble, but that is not completely accurate either. His audience had the advantage on us since they understood the Greek word (PRAUS) Jesus used for "gentle."

GENTLE DOES NOT MEAN. Let us look at what this word "gentle" does NOT mean before we decide what it means. There are four stops in scripture that we could make with our "horse and carriage," but we will only stop three times. The first stop is Col 3:12,

. . . put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (NASB)

The word "gentleness" is the same word that Jesus used, but notice all of the other words - "compassion," "kindness," "humility" and "patience." What does that suggest about

the meaning of the word gentle? It implies that gentle does not mean compassion nor does it mean kindness or any of the other words. Next, we will rein in our horse at Matt. 11:29,

Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. (NASB)

Now PRAUS is translated as "gentle." It is different from the Greek word normally used for "humble." Now we will move on to Titus 3:1-2,

Remind them to be subject to rulers . . . to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (NIV)

Notice that PRAUS is not good manners. I often think of gentleness as involving compassion and as a result having good manners and grace toward others. But gentle does not mean compassion, kind, humble, or good manners.

GENTLE DOES MEAN. PRAUS was sometimes used by the ancients to refer to a "fever being lessened." History says that Xerxes "calmed" his troops. It was used to refer to leniency for the guilty, a soft voice, to be easygoing, not easily offended and considerate. The best sense of PRAUS is illustrated by a "trained dog" or a tame lion that was once

wild. The word has the idea of yielding like a domesticated animal and caring for others.” This third beatitude could read, “Happy are those who lovingly defer or yield to others.” Is that you? Most of us want others to lovingly defer to us - not the reverse.

1 Peter 3:4 now comes alive with meaning when the Holy Spirit encourages wives to dress-up the inside by lovingly deferring to their husbands and not just dressing-up the outside with jewelry.

INSIDE & OUTSIDE. PRAUS is not passive and weak - it is choice. Jesus was tough when He needed to be. Yet, in Matthew 11:29 we hear that Jesus was gentle! The Jewish people were religiously oppressed by their leaders. So He encourages them to take His yoke because He is warm, caring, giving and deferring. He was meek. He eventually stooped down for us when He died. He was humble on the inside and lovingly deferring on the outside. He was strong on the inside and yielding on the outside. Jesus was meek.

Picture Jesus riding on an animal that we do not highly regard as valuable - even today,

Now this took place that what was spoken through the

prophet might be fulfilled, saying, **SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, ‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.** (NASB) Matt. 21:4-5

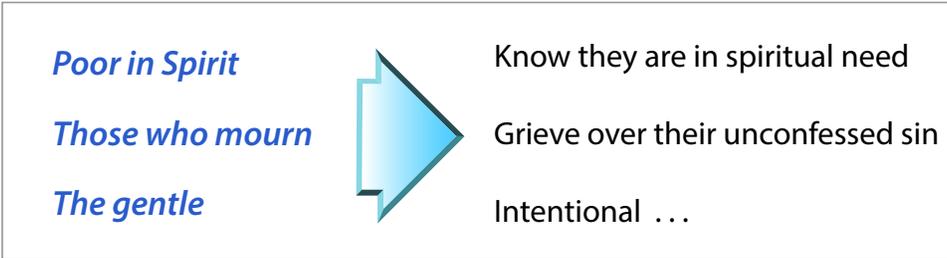
The Talmud quotes King Saporesh, commenting on this prophecy from Zechariah 9:9 as saying, “You say your Messiah will come on an ass, I will send him a brave horse.” Jesus did not come on a “brave horse” but on a poor animal of low regard. Jesus could have come on a “brave horse” to impress, to seek His own glory, to obtain their submission or to receive their adoration. But he did NOT. Gentle does not have an “I” problem.

Can I ask you a question? How do you present yourself to others? Do you want a “brave horse” or is a donkey okay? Numbers 12:3 says that Moses was a very meek man, more than anyone on the earth. Dear Christian, you cannot be truly meek unless the Holy Spirit is changing you on the inside. Gentleness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit according to Gal. 5:22-23. Oh, Holy Spirit, make us meek . . . make us gentle!

INHERIT THE EARTH. What a paradox, those who lovingly defer to others will someday inherit the earth. Jesus’ listeners did not inherit the earth, and Christians have not owned the earth over the last 2,000 years; but some day we will reign with Jesus for a 1,000 years (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6). He will come back and establish His earthly kingdom. The gentle will “inherit the earth” someday - because they are joint heirs with Christ,

And if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ . . . that we may also be glorified together. (NKJV)

Rom. 8:17



C O N C L U - S I O N. Some years ago I had a dog named Prince. He was my friend, and

I trained him to sit, lick my face on command, roll over, beg, shake his paw, stay and heel. We also had a black cat, Cinder, who was not very friendly towards me, yet one day as I was watching Prince lying on the grass in our backyard with his legs outstretched, I saw the cat come to him and lie down between his outstretched legs. They went to sleep. On another day I saw them eating together out of the same food bowl. I was amazed. Prince did not have an “I” problem. He was a loving, yielding friend to everyone.

Can I ask you . . . are you tame? “Do you have an “I” problem? When Jesus gives you a command, do you warmly defer and obey this Friend? Would you willingly, lovingly share your possessions, food and honor in favor for others just as Prince did for his used-to-be enemy, Cinder? You see,

one who knows he/she is a spiritual beggar and mourns his/her sinful condition no longer seeks his/her own, but lovingly yields to love others.

“BLESSED ARE THE GENTLE . . .”