

Meekness Is Not Weakness

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | April 28, 2022



“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5 NIV84).

As followers of Christ, we are called to be meek, but we must not confuse meekness with weakness. And there is no greater example of the contrast between meekness and weakness than Jesus and Pontius Pilate. I encourage you to read all four Gospel accounts of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, especially John 18:29–19:16.

Despite Jesus being falsely accused, lied about, cruelly mistreated, and abused, He retained self-control and a calm, fearless yet meek dignity founded on the strength of His righteous character and trust in His Father that could not be shaken by any worldly assault.

By contrast, Pilate, though empowered with earthly authority that was reinforced by Roman soldiers, demonstrated weakness of character: a fear of what others thought, a willingness to compromise his own judgment and choose the wrong, even when convicted of what was right, merely to avoid the accusation of being disloyal to Caesar and face the potential loss of position and power.

Jesus was meek and strong. Pilate was weak and wrong.

Meekness is a trait of character that stems from the outworking of God's love operating in the heart; weakness of character stems from fear dominating the heart.

As soon as Adam sinned, he ran and hid because he was afraid (Genesis 3:10). Fear that incites selfishness is part of the infection of sin. But "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18 NIV84).

Love focuses our concern on others. Fear focuses on self. Love is willing to sacrifice self for others, whereas fear sacrifices integrity, principle, honor, truth, and others to protect self. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16 NIV84).

The meek love God and others and are not afraid to stand for God's truth; the weak are driven by fear and will compromise the truth to protect themselves.

The meek, having been reborn into God's kingdom of love, experience godly self-control (Galatians 5:23); the weak remain fearful and selfish and seek to make themselves feel safe by trying to control others. These weak people "are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Romans 1:29-31 NIV84).

The meek love others, seek to bless others, and understand that love grows only in freedom; they advance the autonomy of others. But the weak are jealous of others, fear not having what others have, and seek to control others.

The meek present the truth in love and leave others free; the weak lie, manipulate, and coerce all in order to protect themselves.

The religious leaders in Christ's day were weak in character, consumed with fear—fear of loss of power, position, authority, and respect; rather than rejoicing in Jesus and admitting they were wrong, they instead worked to destroy Him.

Jesus taught His disciples to be meek, to respect the choices of those with whom they sought to share the gospel. If people didn't want to listen, the disciples were not to take personal offense, become angry, or seek to retaliate. Instead, they were to recognize that such people were injuring themselves and to simply move on to those who did want to hear the truth, without carrying any of the "dirt" of the rejection with them. "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town" (Matthew 10:14 NIV84). The meek present the truth in love and leave people free.

But the weak in character, if not in positions that enable them to assert control over others, will instead either find someone powerful for them to believe in, follow, surrender themselves to, and become their adherent and pawn; or they become a behind-the-scenes conniver, plotter, and manipulator of others—like Judas, who sought to manipulate Jesus through behind-the-scenes betrayal.

The meek stand firm for truth in the face of opposition; they don't compromise truth or God's principles to garner favor. The weak present what they believe others want to hear in order to be accepted, seeking to manage people around them to keep themselves in good standing.

So, I encourage you, as a follower of Christ, through the grace and love of God, to be meek—but never weak! For Jesus is coming soon to receive those who have been transformed to be like Him. For “we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2 NIV84).

Yes, “blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth!” (Matthew 5:5 NIV84).