

Meekness (Humbleness) in the Crucible¹



SABBATH—DECEMBER 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 32:1–14; Psalm 62:1–8; Ezekiel 24:15–27; Matthew 5:43–48; 1 Peter 2:18–25.

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed are those who are free of pride. They will be given the earth” (Matthew 5:5, NIV).

WE DO NOT USE THE WORD *MEEK*² VERY MUCH, except maybe when we read about Moses or study the Beatitudes.³ It is not hard to understand why. Meekness means “suffering from injury with patience and without complaint” (adapted). So it is no surprise that we do not use the word *meek* much at all. Being meek is a trait⁴ not well respected in most of the world today. Sometimes the Bible explains this word as “humble.” Again, humbleness is not valued among most people in the world.

But meekness is one of the most powerful traits of Jesus and His followers. Meekness of spirit can be a powerful weapon of those who are going through much pain and suffering. The crucible is a great place to learn meekness of heart. This is because our own meekness and broken places can help us be powerful witnesses⁵ for God.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: What is the relationship between suffering and meekness? How can our own meekness and broken places help us be a witness to others? How can meekness really be a strength, not a weakness, for the Christian?

1. crucible—a boiling pot for purifying metals. It also represents a testing time, or time of suffering, that strengthens character, or who we are.

2. meek—very humble.

3. the Beatitudes—the ten rules for happy Christian living given by Jesus in Matthew 5:2–12.

4. trait—the things, or qualities, that make you who you are.

5. witnesses—people who teach others about God by living a Christian life.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 2**BROKEN BREAD AND POURED-OUT WINE (Ezekiel 24:15–27)**

Oswald Chambers, a writer, has said that we are to become “broken bread and poured-out wine” for others. What do you think he means by this?

All through the Bible there are examples of people being “broken” to serve others. Moses was called to endure much gossip and complaints against him as a leader. Joseph was called to a journey that led to his betrayal, to prison, and to slavery in Egypt. In each case, God permitted the situations so that His people’s lives could show His grace and care



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to others. These situations were for the good of Joseph and Moses and for the good of others, too. God may use us in the same way. It is easy to feel angry or hurt in such situations. But as we discussed yesterday, God uses meekness to develop in us the ability to accept such things “with patience and without complaint.”

What is happening here in Ezekiel 24:15–27? Why was Ezekiel put through this crucible?

In verse 24 God says, “ ‘ “What Ezekiel has done will show you what is going to happen to you. You will do just as he has done. Then you will know that I am the Lord and King” ’ ” (NirV). Through Ezekiel’s example the people of Israel would come to believe in the truth about who God was, their Ruler King. This is after they experienced the fulfillment of the prophecy⁶ shown by Ezekiel’s life. But they would understand this only because Ezekiel became broken in the fingers of God for them. Who knows how many people will come to know “the Ruler King” through us in our own broken places, too?

Sooner or later life itself breaks us all. What has been your experience with being broken? What lessons have you learned? How can

6. prophecy—a message given about what will happen in the future.

your own broken soul be used by the Lord to help other people?

asking the Lord not to destroy Israel?

MONDAY—DECEMBER 3

WORKING FOR GRACE (PARDON) (Exodus 32:1–14)

What part did Moses have in the events of Exodus 32:1–14?

The people began worshiping the golden calf. Then God decided they had gone too far. So He announced that He would destroy the people and make a great nation out of Moses. But Moses did not accept God's offer. Moses pleaded for God to show grace (pardon) to His people, and God changed His mind.

Exodus 32:1–14 raises two important issues. First, God's offer to destroy the rebellious (sinful) people and bless Moses was a test for him. God wanted Moses to show just how much mercy he had for these very disobedient people. And Moses passed the test. Like Jesus, Moses pleaded for mercy for sinners. This shows something very interesting. Sometimes God may also let us have problems. God might let us fall into a crucible so that He, we, and the unfallen worlds can know how much mercy we have for sinners.

What reasons did Moses give for



Moses pled with God to not destroy the children of Israel for worshiping the golden calf. Sometimes God lets us fall into a crucible so that the universe can learn how much mercy we have for others.

Second, these verses show that disobedience is a call to show grace. (God's free gift of mercy to save us from our sins.) Grace is needed when people do not deserve it at all. But when they do not deserve it at all is also the time that we do not want to offer it at all. For example, Moses' sister Miriam was saying bad things about him. But Moses cried out to the Lord to heal her from leprosy (Numbers 12). In another example, God was angry with Korah and his followers and planned to destroy them all. But Moses fell on his face to plead

(beg) for their lives. The next day, Israel complained against Moses for the death of the rebels, and God threatened to destroy them all again. But Moses fell face down and encouraged Aaron to quickly make a sacrifice (offering) to God for their forgiveness (Numbers 16). In his own meekness, Moses asked for grace for those who certainly did not deserve it.

Think about the people around you who do not deserve grace. How can you be an example of God's grace to them?

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 4

LOVING THOSE WHO HURT US (Matthew 5:43–48)

Someone once said, “Love our enemies does not mean that we are supposed to love the dirt where the pearl is buried. Rather, it means that we love the pearl which lies in the dust. . . . God does not love us because we are lovable by ourselves. But we become lovable because He loves us.”



“Love your enemies” does not mean loving the dirt where the pearl lies buried. Rather, it means loving the pearl that lies in the dust.

When you think about your “enemies,” what do you consider them to be—the pearl or the dirt around the pearl?

Jesus calls us to love and pray for our enemies in Matthew 5:43–48. What example from nature does Jesus give us that helps us understand why we should love our enemies? What is the point Jesus is teaching us?

In verse 45, Jesus uses the example of His Father in heaven to show how we should treat those who hurt us. They perhaps are the ones who put us in the worst kind of crucibles. Jesus says that His Father sends the blessing of rain to both the righteous (good) and the wicked. If God gives even the wicked rain, how then should we treat them, too?

Jesus is not trying to say that we should always have a warm, fuzzy feeling for everyone who causes us trouble. Love for our enemies does not mean a feeling we have for them. Instead, it means we should do certain actions toward them that show care and thoughtfulness.

Jesus closes these verses with a verse that often causes a lot of debate: “So be perfect, just as your Father in

heaven is perfect' ” (verse 48, NlrV). But the meaning is very clear: Those people who want to be perfect as God is perfect must show love to their enemies as God shows love to His. To be perfect in God's sight is to love your enemies. To do this takes a meekness of heart that only God can give.

Keep in mind the meaning of meekness (“accepting injury with patience and without complaint”). Then list the changes you must make to let the Lord give you the kind of meekness of heart that will help you have the right attitude (feeling) toward “enemies.”

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 5

A CLOSED MOUTH (1 Peter 2:18–25)

The most powerful examples of meekness in the crucible come from Jesus. He said to come and “learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride” (Matthew 11:29, NlrV). He really meant this in ways we cannot imagine.

Peter is offering some surprising advice to slaves in 1 Peter 2:18–25. He describes how Jesus acted toward unfair and painful treatment. Peter also suggests to them that Jesus has left them “an example. He expects you to follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21, NlrV). What principles (rules) of meekness and humbleness in the crucible can we

learn from Jesus' example, as Peter shows us?

It is terrible to watch someone else treat another person unfairly. And it is very painful when we ourselves receive such treatment. We normally believe in fairness. So, we become angry when unfair things are done, and we want to “put them right.”

It is not easy to live like this. It is perhaps possible if we accept one important truth. The truth is that in all unfair situations, we must believe that our Father in heaven is in full control (power). He will work for our good according to His will (plan). We must accept that we may not always be saved from injustice. But we must always remember that our Father in heaven is still with us and in control.

Peter's advice comes from the example of Jesus' life. This is surprising because silence during unfair suffering is a greater witness to the glory of God than “putting people right.” For example, when Jesus was being questioned by Caiaphas and Pilate, He could have said a lot of things to correct the situation and to make Himself look right, but He did not. His silence was a testimony (witness) to His meekness.

How do you deal with your own unfair situations? How can you better use some of the principles you have learned in your own life?

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 6**OUR ROCK AND REFUGE
(SAFETY) (Psalm 62:1–8)**

So often the most proud people are those who suffer from low self-esteem. Their pride (total lack of meekness) is shown as a cover for something lacking inside. What they need, as we all do, is to feel safe, accepted, and worthy, especially in times of trouble and suffering. We can find these things only through the Lord. In short, meekness and humbleness are not signs of weakness. Instead, they are often the most powerful example of a soul grounded on the Rock (Jesus).



Humbleness is a powerful example that our souls are grounded on the Rock (Jesus).

What seems to be the background for Psalm 62:1–8? What point is David making? What spiritual (godly) principles (rules) can you learn from what he is saying? Most important, how can you learn to use these principles in your own life?

“Without reason men will become our enemies. People of the world and some Christians will misunderstand God’s people. The Lord’s servants will be put in hard places. A mountain will be made of a molehill to make men seem right in following a selfish, unrighteous [unholy] path. . . . Through lying these men will be involved in hidden, dishonest practices because events beyond their control made their work difficult to understand. They will be known as men who cannot be trusted. And this will be done by some members of the church. God’s servants must protect themselves with the mind of Christ. They must not expect to be judged rightly. They will be called over-religious. But let them not become discouraged. God is in full control of His plans. He will guide His work to the glory of His name.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White in *Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 370.

How protected are you against the insults of others? You are not that protected, are you? What can you do to be better united (to be as one) with the Lord? How can you improve your sense of self-worth through the One who loves you so much that He died for your sins? And what can you do to protect yourself against the insults of others?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 7

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Seeking True Knowledge,” pp. 453, 454, in *The Ministry [Work] of Healing*; “The Sermon on the Mount,” pp. 298–314, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Worker and His Qualifications,” p. 630, in *Evangelism*.⁷

“The difficulties [hardships] we face may be less if we have that meekness which hides itself in Christ. If we are as humble as Jesus, we shall not feel the insults or disappointments that we get daily. And they will stop putting a gloom over the spirit. The highest proof of a noble Christian is his self-control. If he fails to keep a calm and trustful spirit under abuse or cruelty, he robs God of His right to show in him His own perfection [holy] of character [life]. A humble heart is the strength that gives victory to the followers of Christ. It is the example of their connection with heaven.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ How does a humble spirit let us overcome insults and disappointments? What do you think is the most important part of being humble that lets us do this?
- ❷ In your own part of the world, how do people think of other people being humble and meek? Are they respected, laughed at, or what? What kind of pressures do you face that work against your receiving these character traits?
- ❸ Are there any living examples of people being humble and meek today? If so, who are they? How have they shown these traits? And what can you learn from them?
- ❹ Why is it that we so often think of meekness as weakness?
- ❺ We saw how David depended on the Lord to keep him safe. But how does that work? How is that protection always shown? In other words, how can we, as a church, offer protection to those who need to be protected? What kind of protection does your own local church give? What can you do to help make it a place of safety for those who need it?

7. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.