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Matthew 5:5 *The Meek*

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"...You are glorious and wonderful beyond anything we can imagine. We are now about to open Your word, and who is man that You would be mindful of him? And yet Lord, You've created us in Your image. You sent Jesus to die for us. He is preparing places for us and we all want to be there. And we are asking for a miracle today Lord that You would speak to us directly where we are at in our experience. We pray that You would be the One who teaches us. And we ask this Jesus' name, Amen."

I was very young in our faith, had joined the church maybe a year before this experience took place. I was visiting in a pastor's home. I had just met the pastor that particular Sabbath. And he recognized that I had no families that were Adventists, and so, he invited me over to his house. He had a wife and a daughter, and we had a nice meal. And in the afternoon, he and I were speaking together. I do not know where the wife and daughter were when this experience took place? The pastor was the type of person, when he spoke, he spoke loud. You know, he was just loud when he spoke.

And the phone rang, he went to another room, and he answered the phone. I could hear him, "Hello!" He gave his name. And I didn't want to be listening in, but couldn't help it. I could hear everything that was going on. I am just sitting there in the living room wondering what I'm supposed to do? And I heard him say, "Well I'll tell you what to do. Go down to..." so and so, and he named a business, "...go down there, buy two concrete blocks, put them in your back and get a spine, and become a man!" Wow, I thought! And I was picturing some poor fellow, some overbearing woman beating down on him, children out of control, some wretch of this weak man, you know. "Get a couple of concrete blocks and put them in your spine and become a man."

Well, I don't know if I determined right at that point, but since then, I have thought about it a lot. And I've decided, on my tomb stone, there are many things that could be there. You could write, "He made a lot of mistakes." I wouldn't mind that. You could write, "The guy was..." I don't know, "...he couldn't sing." That's okay, you could write that. Don't write, "He was meek." It just doesn't sit well. There is something about a concept of a meek man that drives me nuts. I don't want to be known as a meek man, I don't like our picture of a meek man, I don't like somebody to have to tell me, "Go get a couple of concrete blocks and put them in your back so you can get a spine." I don't want to be anywhere close to that or associated with it. Yet, Jesus said, "The meek are blessed." Now I want to study that with you today.

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5 verse 5, Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the Earth." Now the Greek word that is used here is hard for me to pronounce. So I will not pronounce it. I'll just refer to it as 'that Greek word.' It's complicated to describe in one English word, in fact, you can't. There is no single English word to describe it. And we have to look at it in the context of what Jesus is saying, and that would help us to understand it a little bit. The first thing I want you to know is that Jesus is describing a spiritual condition, not a natural disposition. In other words, this is spiritual. There is a spiritual meekness that He is talking about that affects an individual. He is not talking about the type of

person who is just this timid, weak, doormat. You can kick him, and you know, kick him again because you know all they are going to do is whimper. You know, nothing is going to happen.

He is not describing that type of person. He is describing a spiritual condition. In fact, that is made clear to us in Galatians chapter 5. Please turn there. Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23. The Apostle Paul is describing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And these nine things are actually characteristics of God Himself which come into the heart of an individual when Christ lives there and the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them. It says in verse 22: "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness..." that's the Greek word that Jesus uses, "meekness, gentleness, self-control." So we see that it is a Godly trait. I do not picture God being spineless. I don't picture God as being this timid little doormat that you just keep kicking around the universe, and doing with Him what you will, and there is no retaliation because He is so timid or so meek.

There is something more about this than what we understand from the Greek or from the English understanding of the word, "meek." First of all, let's go back to Matthew 5 and look at it in its context. You will note that Jesus is starting us on a journey that is a spiritual journey that takes us one rung of a ladder at the time into a higher spiritual level. It begins in verse 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." We had a whole sermon about that. Blessed is the person who recognizes the poverty of spirit that they have, bankrupt spiritually, no righteousness to offer God at all. That person who understands that and embraces Christ is the person who has the Kingdom of God right now. The person, who has done that, will then naturally go to the next rung and that is a sorrow for sin because of what it has done to God. What it cost for their salvation, what sin does to God. And they will have a Godly sorrow for sin. When they have the Godly sorrow for sin, God will give a Godly comfort to them.

We are climbing the ladder further, "Blessed are the meek." You see, a person who has poverty of spirit, and a person who has a Godly sorrow for sin will naturally have a Godly humility. Because they recognize, they've got nothing to offer, they've caused God tremendous amount, and here they are. It is described in the Bible as being the opposite of being "proud in heart." Well let's turn in our Bibles to Proverbs 16 verse 5. It says here, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Though they join forces, none will go unpunished." "The proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord." Certainly the Lord is contrasting the humility of heart with the pride of heart, in Matthew chapter 5.

Proverbs 16 verses 18 and 19. It goes on to say, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." In Proverbs 28 verse 25, another reflection on this. It says in verse 25: "He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered." Now I want you to know brothers and sisters, I really enjoyed preaching about the Sermon on the Mount. I enjoyed looking at the background in our first message. I enjoyed the message about being poor in spirit. I enjoyed the message about mourning and being comforted by God. I enjoyed those messages. In fact, I will clearly and freely say to anyone almost anywhere, anyplace: "I am a sinner, I need a Savior." That is no problem. You would do the same thing. If I were to raise my hand right now and ask, "How many sinners do we have here?" You would raise your hand.

But, the problem we have is a pride in our heart. I am willing to admit I am a sinner, but I am not willing for you to admit, I am a sinner. You see, that's a problem that we have. And the proud in heart stir up strife. You can see this in marriages, you can see it in relationships, you can see it in workplace, you can see it in churches. "The proud in heart stirs up strife", they are troublemakers. They are sensitive and easily offended. They are always justifying themselves and they are defensive. They have feelings of superiority and feelings of inferiority, but always, they are self-obsessed. It is about them! That is what it means to be proud in heart. You can have a very low opinion of yourself and be filled with pride. You can have a very high opinion of yourself and be filled with pride. It's the problem of the human condition.

Religiously, it becomes even more of a problem. Because we can join a church, we can get involved, we can be very careful in our lifestyle, and unfortunately, instead of recognizing a poverty of spirit, we can become spiritually satisfied. "I've got enough." And instead of having a Godly sorrow for sin, we have no deep sorrow for sin. And we'll admit, we are sinners, but we will not allow anyone else to admit, we are sinners. And so, if I say to my spouse, "Yes, I have a weakness in this area," it's okay if I say it. But if my spouse says, "You have a weakness in this area," I am ready to fight. And religiously, if we are spiritually satisfied, and we have no deep sorrow for sin, we can actually develop a pride of our humility, being proud of our humility.

You know, number of years ago there was a county that decided to have a new award. And it would be an award for the humblest person in the county, the person with the most humility. And so they found that man. And they brought him there to the county fair, and they gave him this price, it said: "The most humble man in the county." And the minute he accepted it, they took it away from him. We can become proud of our humility. "Meekness", what does it mean? Well, if you were to read twenty good authors about this topic, you would come up with twenty good sermons. And I've decided I am not going to spend twenty weeks on this verse. We'll spend one week on it. I will promise you, I can assure you, we cannot exhaust its theme today.

But as I studied the scriptures, I discovered there were two men in the Bible, two men who were called, "meek." And so, we are going to look at their lives today, and from their lives we will learn what we can apply to our own life. Let's look first at Matthew 11 verse 29. These words are the words of Jesus. It is an invitation. He says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle..." That's the same Greek word, "...and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Jesus says, "I am humble, I am meek." It's fascinating that you can say that and be that.

In fact, the next character, it's even more surprising. Look what's written about him. It's Moses. Turn to Numbers chapter 12 verse 3. Now Moses wrote Numbers. I have a hard time believing he wrote this, maybe he did? Somebody did. And it's added in parenthesis in my Bible. But it says in verse 3, "(Now the man Moses was very; humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)" It's hard to imagine him writing that. Yet Jesus said He was humble; Jesus said He was meek; Jesus said He was lowly. There is something about being meek that we don't understand because of our English concept of being meek. Moses and Jesus are the only two men that I was able to find in the Scriptures that are clearly identified as being meek.

Now we are going to take a little journey with them and learn what we can. We are going to begin in Hebrews chapter 5 as we talk about Jesus. Hebrews chapter 5 verses 8 and 9. It's

speaking of Jesus, it says: "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Now note this. It says regarding Jesus that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Jesus learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation."

Well I know there is a lot of confusion about the word, "perfection." What it means to be perfect? There is a Greek concept of being perfect. The Greek concept is you grow, grow, grow and you arrive at the point and you stay there. You are perfect. The Hebrew concept of perfection is "mortalios" (?) like a telescope. It's you are continually growing. You are continually maturing. You never really do actually arrive. And that's obviously what it would be written about here. Jesus didn't arrive at the point and stay there. He was continually growing. His growth came by His obedience and by what He suffered.

Now this is extremely important when it comes to understanding meekness. You accept Christ as your Savior. You have a good confession to Him about your sin, and you are honest with Him about it, you are open, and so on and so forth. You will not become immediately meek. It is a life process. We will see that especially in the experience of Moses. Let's look at Exodus, chapter 2 verse 11. We will read about Moses and it says: "And it came to pass in those days when Moses was grown that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and he hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold two Hebrew men were fighting."

"And he said to the one who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?' Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' So Moses feared and said, 'Surely, this thing is known.' When Pharaoh heard of this matter he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well." Now, I will just be honest with you. Jesus learned obedience by what he suffered. He became perfect that way. And that's fascinating to me, but hard to understand. Jesus was God. Jesus was man. Jesus was 100% God; Jesus was 100% man. When I look at His life, I don't understand His life. But I can relate to Moses. Moses is a man. Moses was born a man. Moses has like passions that all of us have. And here it says that Moses killed a man, and that he fled to Midian.

Now you know the story. It will take forty years. Moses will be shepherding sheep. And one day on the backside of the desert, God will speak to him and say: "Go, deliver My people." It took forty years for Moses to learn meekness. Jesus didn't even live that long. What I am trying to point out to you, brothers and sisters, is very discouraging sometimes. And the devil will seek to discourage you. You've accepted Christ, you confessed your sins, you believe you are forgiven, but why did you have that thought? Why did you do that? Why did you say that? And the devil comes in right behind it and says: "You must not really be a Christian. Because if you were really a Christian you wouldn't think that way, you wouldn't say that or you wouldn't do that." Please brothers and sisters understand, it is a process between now and when Jesus arrives, we will be in process. None of us are going to arrive. The good news is that in Christ we are accepted.

So Moses, it would take forty years for him to learn to be meek. Now, one of the things that we must understand is, the English word, "meek" is a poor translation of the Greek word. Because meek to us, we think of a doormat type person. Just kick them around, and they don't even have enough within them to fight. But meek people in the Bible are very courageous. Look at Exodus 7 verse 7, Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83 when they spoke to Pharaoh. Moses goes in to Pharaoh and as a spokesperson for God says, "Let my people go." Pharaoh says, "Who's your God?" And Moses says, "Well I'll show you." One plague after another and each time Moses is going in to Pharaoh, his life is being threatened, but Moses serves a bigger God than Pharaoh will ever be. And when it's over, Moses can say, "You are done buddy, your country is wasted, we are out of here and we are taking the wealth with us."

That is a meek man. The meekest man on the earth was a courageous man. He could look the most powerful man in the world in the eyes and say, "My God is bigger than you and I serve Him, and I am not afraid of you." That's a meek man according to the Scriptures. There are many instances that we could show the courage of Jesus but we'll stay in theme. Moses went up against the politics or the political leaders of his day. Let's have Jesus going up against the political leaders in his day. John 19 verse 10, Pilot is speaking, it says: "Are You not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify You and power to release You?"

Now Jesus is going to look him right in the eye, and He says, "You can have no power at all against Me unless it'd been given you from above. Therefore the one who has delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Pilot knew what was going on. He was standing before a man greater than Him, and from that point on he sought to release Jesus though He was unsuccessful because of his own covertness. So we find that being meek in the Scriptures does not mean what we normally think it means. People who are meek in the Scriptures are strong, courageous, powerful individuals because of God in their life.

Now, meekness is associated with being poor, being poor because of oppression. Meekness is associated with animals. Now I am talking about the Greek word; an animal, a wild animal that becomes domesticated. And so many sermons would be preached about the poor people who've been beat down into meekness, into poverty, theirs will be the kingdom of the Earth. But Moses wasn't beat down into poverty and Jesus never had anything. So He wasn't beat down into poverty though He chose to live that life. So that doesn't always apply. Then there are other examples. The same word was used to describe when you take a wild animal and you domesticate it. You take a stallion that is running the reins, you know, just the range, and going all over. And that horse is corralled, and its powers are still there, but they are subject to another one. And that describes meekness back to the Greeks.

What I found most fascinating, was how the word was used in the day of Jesus. As you know, I like to study that so we can understand what Jesus meant, what the people were hearing, then we can apply it to our lives. Three hundred years before Jesus was born, Aristotle lived. You've all heard of Aristotle. He was a philosopher of morality and ethics. And Aristotle came up with a theory about ethics. And it was this. That if you take the mean between two extremes, you will find virtue. Now, we don't use the term "mean" too much in English. And when I hear it, I think of a snarl personality person, you know. But not so, "mean" means the average, the center. So

he said, you take two extremes, and you balance it by the center, and that's where you find virtue.

An example would be this. You take a miser and spendthrift – the two extremes regarding money. In the middle, you will find a generous person. So that's how he determined ethics. That's how he determined morality. Take the two extremes, come to the middle and there is your virtue. The very word that Jesus quoted for meekness is the word that was used in Greek culture and society for anger. Now that shocked me. One hand, you have unbridled anger, the other hand, you have no anger. In the middle, you have meekness. Did you realize this actually could be translated: "Blessed are the angry, for they shall inherit the Earth." Now that shocks me.

You know, I would love to do an exhaustive study on anger because it's something we all have. We all have anger. Some of us suppress it, others of us express it, and others of us are in between. We all have anger. And Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have anger." What in the world can that mean? Well, first of all, let's see if our two examples ever expressed anger. Let's look at John chapter 2, verse 13: "Now, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen, and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changer's money and overturned the tables."

"And He said to those who sold doves, take these things away, do not make My Father's house, a house of merchandise." Now I have purposed, I tried to read that as passively as possible and keep you awake. And I would just be honest with you, and I've tried not to read it like an effeminate man lest it would offend people. Is that how it happened? I mean, Jesus just kind of goes there, and He tips a few tables over, and He runs the people out, "Go away, you've made My Father's house, a house of merchandise." It doesn't say He was angry. But I'll tell you He was. There is passion in the action of Christ. There is fire shooting in His eyes. And when He arrives there and sees what's going on, it stirs within Him anger. And He rushes in there, and He knocks those tables over, and He is running the sheep and all the people out. And it is so powerful and so profound that the religious leaders who were like the mafia back then, they flee for their lives.

You don't flee for your life from some limp-wrist, whatever that's walking around. Jesus was angry. They recognize the passion, and they ran from His presence. In Mark chapter 3 it speaks of Him being angry. Jesus is in church, and there is a man with a withered hand. And there are religious leaders there who are wanting to drag Jesus on into an open battle about Sabbath observance. And they are hoping that Jesus would do something with this man so they can accuse Him. In fact, they seek to kill Him afterwards. You read about it in Mark chapter 3 verse 5: "So when He..." that's Jesus, "... had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand,' and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."

Brothers and sisters, God was angry. Jesus was angry at religious people and how they were debating what to do or not to do on the Sabbath. Jesus was angry because people who could have been ministered to were not being ministered to. People who could have had kindnesses

done to them were not having kindnesses done to them because religious people were debating what to do on the Sabbath. Are you comfortable with that recognizing that makes God angry? I ponder, my wife and I ponder. I am going to bring you on this one Karen; I am not going to hang alone. People wanting to do something to help other people on the Sabbath, are often criticized by people who have sat at the table and overate. And they are just plopped like a melded jellybean in the chair. And they are critical of this, and critical of that, and we shouldn't do this, and we shouldn't do that. I am telling you brothers and sisters, we need to reevaluate. According to Mark 3, Jesus was angry that people weren't being served when they could have been.

Jesus was angry. What about Moses? You know after all that was Jesus, and He is God, and He couldn't sin. He could but He didn't. He could have chosen to sin, let's make sure we understand that. But He chose not to sin. He was angry and He sinned not. What about Moses because that's the human. That's the one we can really relate to. Let's go to Exodus 32, what is he like? Exodus, chapter 32, verses 19 and 20, the golden calf experience, it says: "So it was, as soon as he came near the camp that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot..." Huh, have you ever been there? I mean have you been so angry that you are hot?

Moses was. He became hot, "...and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it." "There is your god, go drink it." This guy is mad! He smashes the covenant tablets, demolishes the golden calf, grinds it up in the powder, sprinkles it on the water, "Drink it!" We go on to read that on this very day, he tells people to gird themselves with their swords. Look at verse 26. "...then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, 'Whoever is on the Lord's side, - come to me!' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him."

"And he said to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" Three thousand people die. Moses is hot! What does God do about it? God says, "That's my boy!" He's got it. He did what was right. Moses will get angry again, and God will not say the same thing. Look at Numbers, chapter 20, and we'll start with verse 7: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water. Thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.'"

"So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said to them: 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'" Wow! God said, "Gather the people, speak to the rock, water will come out of the rock. We'll water the congregation, their flocks, there will be plenty. Make Me holy in their eyes."

So Aaron calls all the people, Moses takes the rod, whack, whack, hits it twice. “Do we have to do this all the time for you?” Water comes out, they were watered, all the congregation, all the people. When it was over, God said: “Moses, Aaron, neither one of you can take the people into the Promised Land. Can’t do it.” You see, meekness, is being angry at the right thing, being angry at the right time, and being angry in the right way. That is meekness. It requires the supernatural experience with God.

Well, how can we become that way? Look at Numbers 12. There is an interesting family squabble that takes place between Moses and his brother and sister; Miriam and Aaron. In verse 1 it says, “Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, ‘Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?’ And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)”

Verse 4, “...Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, “Come out you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!” So the three came out. Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.” So the Lord says, “Yes, Aaron, Miriam, you have prophesied, I’ve spoken to you.” But note this: “Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”

“Moses sees Me! Moses looks into My face, Moses hears My words, and he is faithful in all of his house. He does what I tell him to do. Why were you not afraid to raise a critical thought against him?” Moses, face to face with God – look at Jesus! John chapter 5 verse 19. Jesus says this: “Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do...” You see, He is seeing the Father as well. “...for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” We go to verse 30, same chapter. Jesus says, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me.” Jesus also is being obedient; Jesus also seeing the Father; Jesus hearing the Father, and Jesus being obedient to the Father. Moses, seeing the Father, hearing the Father, obedient to the Father, and each of them are meek men.

Now here is our text. This is for us. James chapter 1 verses 21 and 22, it says this: “Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.” “...receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.” Jesus says in Matthew 5 verse 5, “Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the Earth.” That is for us Adventists, a key text. It is an eschatological application of receiving the Kingdom. Soon, when Jesus returns, we’ll have this. And Jesus is saying for those people who will be ready to meet Him in peace, they will have accepted Christ. They will have given an honest confession of their sin to the Lord. And they will be in process of learning to be meek.

How are they in process? They see the face of God in prayer. They listen to Him by reading His word, and seek to do His will in their lives. And in those simple steps, God teaches them to be

meek. He teaches them that if they are going to have anger, it will be the right type of anger, at right time and in the right place. He teaches them that their will has to be submitted to Him. They are not to be a wild animal out there, just doing whatever their passions want them to do. And He also teaches them that if you should lose anything in the cause of God, don't worry because when He returns, you'll get all the Earth as a reward. And of course, eternity spent with Him. The question is do we want to be those people? Do we want to be the type of person who sees the face of God in prayer? Who listens to Him through the Word, and who seeks to do His will? If you want to be that type of person, I want you to stand.

“Father in Heaven, we ask Jesus to come into our heart and we pray by His grace, that we will see Your face in prayer. We will listen to You through Your word, and we will do Your will in our lives. Teach us Lord to be meek, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.”