

10. Meekness in the Crucible

Biblical material: Exod. 32:1-14, Ps. 62:1-8, Ezek. 24:15-27, Matt. 5:43-48, 1 Pet. 2:18-25.

Quotes

- The English are mentioned in the Bible: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. *Mark Twain*
- It's going to be fun to watch and see how long the meek can keep the earth once they inherit it. *Kin Hubbard*
- Meekness: Uncommon patience in planning a revenge that is worth while. *Ambrose Bierce*
- The meek shall inherit the earth? Well... I don't think so. If by meek you mean friendly and introverted, okay maybe, but if by meek you mean unwilling to take a chance, then never. If I was a betting man and I had to wager on who I thought would inherit the earth, my money would be on the curious. *Jim Coudal*
- God has two dwellings; one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart. *Izaak Walton*

Questions

How do we demonstrate meekness? What of "pretentious piety"? Is it right simply to be uncomplaining, or should we follow Job's example and protest? How are we changed? Why should we value meekness as a quality—and how do we share this with others? What of our own individuality—the power to think and to do? What is God trying to achieve?

Discussion

Again the problem with the crucible illustration is that whatever is being subjected to the fire has no choice. We however are beings of choice, and we can jump out of the frying pan into the fire, to mix metaphors! So what do we mean about being meek in the crucible? Is it simply passivity? Or is it something far more active?

In *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, the character Uriah Heep is proud that he is so "umble"! Can we take pride in our humility, be conceited in our meekness? What are we truly looking for, and how is it best achieved?

Comment

Review of Ps 51. Written by David, identified by Scripture as a 'Man after God's own heart'—a statement which gives some people great concern. The meaning is simply that David was *after* God's own heart—he wanted to have a heart like God's, even though he often failed. He was sincere in seeking God, and trying to follow his way: which is what God wants from all of us.

v.1 A great cry. Can you hear the pain and suffering here. David is desperate to come back to a right relationship with God. He feels *terrible*. Why? Does God condemn him? No. He condemns himself.

v.2-5. He knows deep in his innermost self what has gone wrong. He has a tremendous sense of sin: that terrible sickness that leads to death. In fact, it would not be over-stating the case to say that he feels as if he is dying.

v.6-8. He wants healing cleansing, he wants to know that the relationship is restored, that his sins have been cured so that they no longer cause that separation he feels so keenly from God, his closest friend. He is absolutely desolate. And so he cries:

v.10. *I need to be re-created!* Nothing else will do. That's why we talk about being born again. Just to be fixed up is not enough. What we need is to be made over again. If any man is in Christ he is a *new creation*. *Renew* a right spirit within me. Only God can do this!

v.11-12 Don't reject me God. That's what Jesus experienced on the cross as he took our sins, which led him to cry out in agony and pain: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' The most terrible experience when God gives up—and let's us go our own way. Like a child crying in the dark David cries: "Don't leave me!" Give me back what I most need—the joy of salvation (often so sadly lacking!)

v.13-15 Promises to God. Not as payment, but as expressions of what God can do through us. We should be saying the same things.

v.16-17. What *does* God really want? That's the question we all ask! What must I do to be saved? Answer: God does not delight in formal ceremonies, or ritual observance, or painful payment. He has no pleasure in making demands like that on us. A "cold, heartless religion" as EGW calls it.

What God wants is: a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. There it is, spelled out for us. Not very pleasant, is it? God wants us, not in all the perfection we think we are, but he wants us broken. Would you want broken, damaged goods? Hardly! If you went down the market and were offered broken plates and cups and saucers, would you buy them? But it seems that's what God wants? Why?

Because if we admit how we are, broken and destroyed by sin, then God will not reject us, rather he can help us. If we come with spiritual pride, then he can't do anything for us. Of ourselves we come like the Pharisees with the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and think we are fine when we need to see ourselves as we really are: poor, broken, defective people.

How does God deal with broken hearts? He gives us new ones. A heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone. A new spirit of loving trust instead of broken rebellion. A heart that is true instead of a heart that is false.

God is not interested in fixing the old. He wants to make us new. Our old selves are to be renewed. God has to remake us in his image, not polish up the old image. God can only really help us and heal us if we are broken. That's why it's so painful. We are broken and need to recognize this. God doesn't come along with his hammer to smash us up. But as we fall and as we break, as we see ourselves as weak broken people, then he can take away those broken shards of sin that cut us and wound us, and give us living, loving trustworthy hearts.

Ellen White Comments

But while we urge upon you meekness and lowliness of heart, let no one imagine that the acquirement of this grace demands that you should be coarse and uncultivated. The religion of Christ never degrades the receiver. It refines and ennobles the character. We should study carefully lest we cultivate some trait of character that is unlike the divine Pattern, and not in harmony with the blessed will of God. Just as soon as there is the diligent study of the Bible that there should be, we shall not fail of noting a marked difference in the characters of the people of God. We shall say from the heart, "The things I once loved, I now hate; and the things I once hated, I now love." {RH, April 9, 1889}