

Meekness

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What does the word, "meekness," present to your mind? I've heard it said, and I suppose rightly so, that we must not equate meekness with weakness. To be sure, they are two distinctly different characteristics, but jumping ahead a bit in what I'm going to try to share, I'm inclined to point out that genuine meekness rarely, if ever, exists apart from raw exposure to one's weakness(es). Please do keep that in mind. If every time you face challenges in life you are able to find resources in your natural make-up to rise to the occasion, I doubt that meekness in you will have much opportunity to take root.

Pooling together the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as meekness in the Bible, you come up an interpretation-range indicating, or suggesting, soft, pliant, submissive, humble, gentle, mild and even poor. While those speak of inner qualities, meekness can also refer to being circumstantially needy. Wow, sounds like someone who needs to attend a seminar in assertiveness training.

I heard it said many times in regard to meekness not equating to weakness, that meekness really means strength which is under control.

While realizing the truth in that statement, nearly every time I've heard it said, or read it in some devotional writing, I've nearly always come away feeling that folks probably aren't going to really understand the nature of meekness if they merely proceed from that definition.

When you look up the words that Strong's Exhaustive Concordance refers you to after you've looked up the primary word translated, "meek" or "meekness," you discover that being harshly dealt-with, depressed and brow-beaten, among other such things, have something to do with meekness. It would seem that meekness not only has to do with the grace that enables one to accept and incorporate positively such treatment in one's life, but that such treatment invites a condition of meekness.

This is going to sound silly, but right at this point while I'm writing, I'm getting a flashback to an incident from my youth. I was a fast runner

as a kid, at least through all my elementary school days and remained fast enough even in High School so that I could respectably compete in sports that required some speed. There were those very early years when, in my town, no one could outrun me. Anytime we had a foot race (as we kids seemed to do much more than kids today), I would step up to the starting line confident that I'd leave the rest of the pack in my dust.

Well, was I in for a shock. I was a member of our schools "boy patrol" which was responsible for ushering fellow students across the streets leading to school. We had a long pole with a red flag attached to the end with which we were authorized to hold back students or even traffic.

The job came with a special belt affair that went around your waist and across your chest and included a bright shiny badge. A kid could easily get drunk on such power.

In those days, boys were chosen to do that task rather than the senior citizens who volunteer for it today. I finally became captain of our patrol which qualified me to go to Washington, DC to take part in a giant boy patrol parade composed of ten thousand boys from all over the country. What an experience it was, one from my boyhood that I'll never forget.

During a period of a couple hours of free time, several of us from different parts of the country decided to have a foot-race. No problem, I thought. This will be just like all the other races I'd been in. I'll probably not even have to give it my all.

Big miscalculation on my part! I couldn't help notice the obvious cool confidence of the slightly-built, freckle-faced kid that stepped up to the starting line to my right.

The little smile on his face and twinkle in his eye was a mite disconcerting, but I put it out of my mind immediately, not being able to seriously entertain the fear of being beaten by such an unimpressive-looking competitor.

Someone yelled, "go" and we took off.

I didn't leap into the lead in my usual fashion, but for the first few yards I was holding my own, and then he poured it on and took the

lead with such shocking ease that it was hard for me to even imagine, and he ended up beating me soundly by several strides. There was no use insisting on best of three, because I knew, this kid was FAST, yes, woe to me, faster than I was. Could it be? Had I really been beaten? Would I never again be able to savor that special feeling of superiority that my running speed had given me? I had to face the truth. I was a second-best runner.

Indulge me my silliness, but I experienced meekness for the first time I can remember. Many other life experiences would come down the pike much more humbling, depressing, brow-beating and harsh-dealing than that one, and with each, a little more meekness slipped in through my ego door in spite of how hard I tried to keep it firmly shut.

Natural, worldly success is not normally the stuff that makes for a soft, pliant, gentle, submissive and humble disposition. Our "successes" tend to cultivate just the opposite flavor of character; hardness, unyieldedness self-assertiveness and stubborn resistance. Our Lord was meek. He was gentle and yielding, but oh, so strong. Here again we have the difference between the kingdoms (even our own little ones) of this world and the kingdom of God. We tap into God's strength as Jesus did, in meekness. We're struck with many a hard blow in this life, each one weakening us a little more, each one jarring open our ego door a bit more, even violently splintering it at times, but we are so blessed by this sovereign dealing of the Lord that opens us to meekness, the ground of all true strength.

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