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| **SERIES** | **Pursuit of Happiness** |
| **BIBLE** | Matthew 5:5, Psalm 37, Phil. 2, John 3, Matthew 11:29 (21:5, too) |
| **TITLE** | **#3**: Strength Under Control (or, How to Enjoy or Endure Anything) |
| **OVERVIEW** | Some think meekness is weakness. In a world where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer and where injustice seems to get worse everyday, it can feel like you have to fight dirty to win. Anything else - like meekness - would lead to losing. But Jesus changes the whole equation. Instead of it being about winning a life you want around you, it actually becomes about faithfully cultivating the life God wants within you. In fact, as Jesus assures us, when we put more focus on heaven in us, we actually get earth "thrown in," as C.S. Lewis suggested when he wrote in *Mere Christianity*, "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither." |
| **SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN** | Throughout this series we get to see the map to true happiness. This is satisfaction and lightness not as the world defines or describes it, but as God has designed it. Jesus has already affirmed that those who are spiritually bankrupt are actually the richest. He has affirmed that those who lean into their grief know the "expansion of the soul" (Jerry Sitser) and the comfort and purpose (2 Cor. 1:4) that comes from it. Now, Jesus affirms that it it is meekness that leads to gain. But not gain by grabbing; this is gain by inheritance.5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. **Matthew 5:5****MEEK/GENTLE - [Greek] praus**"Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the OT, **the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend against injustice**. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time (Isa 41:17, Luk 18:1-8). Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will (Gal 5:23)." [FROM BLUELETTERBIBLE.COM](https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4239/esv/mgnt/0-1/)**JESUS AS GENTLE** - *praus* - Matthew 11:29, 21:5*Matthew 11:29.* Jesus invites his followers, particularly the ones who are tired from toil, weary from war, and especially sick of empty striving, to come to him. He says to take his yoke - his life *in* and *for* them - seriously and to learn from him. Why? Because he is *praus* - gentle/meek. *Matthew 21:5*. In a prophetic reference from Zachariah 9:9, Jesus is described as King - all powerful. But this King would be "humble" - *praus* - and come riding on a donkey. Now, was Jesus weak? Was he a wuss? Absolutely not. He carried the fullness of God within himself (Col. 1:19). He is a King. In fact, there are moments where Jesus met strength with strength. But the all-powerful Jesus lived with his strength under restraint; his strength was surrendered to the purposes of God. So, meekness/gentleness/*praus* is strength under control, not weakness; and, in particular, it is strength that is surrendered to the will of God. This brings true happiness. **THOSE WHO INHERIT THE EARTH** - *not specifically praus* - but examples of going low to go high* **Samson** - Judges 16:28 - called on the Lord and gained his final strength to overcome his enemies.
* **David** -Psalm 28:7 - it was God, not his military prowess, that gave him victory over his enemies.
* **Hannah** - 1 Samuel 1:27 - the grace of God skips a nation and goes directly to a distressed woman in tears...and her son becomes the great prophet Samuel that leads a people and anoints kings.
* **Jesus** - Philippians 2:7, 2:9 - Jesus emptied himself; God highly exalted him.
* **Paul** - 2 Corinthians 12:9-12 - "when I am weak, then am I strong"
* **Peter** - 1 Peter 5:6-7 - humble yourself before God...that he may exalt you.
* ***Inheriting the earth*** is part of a holistic salvation. This is *not* prosperity gospel (i.e. follow God and you'll get wealthier). This *is* saying that when we follow Jesus, we know how to enjoy the things of earth, or at least endure them well - the intimacy and peace of marriage, the companionship of friends, the strength to face my present sickness, the patience to get out of debt, the courage to repair relationships, etc.
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| **GOSPEL** | Jesus went through death to bring life. He went through humiliation and *then* came exaltation. Jesus went first. He went down to bring us up. In the same way, we must humble ourselves to be lifted up, die to ourselves to live, declare our spiritual bankruptcy to become spiritually rich. |
| **NEXT**STEPS | **Begin** by following Jesus and going *down* to the baptism waters to come *up* a new creation (symbolically). **Grow** through surrendering the still hard parts of your heart; go down to go up.**Engage** by serving others for other's good and God's glory. Their profit, not your platform. |