

Peace

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5

Canaan. The promised land. A place that represented freedom. This was God's promise to the Israelites, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6:3). There were many promises embedded within this land "to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant" (Deuteronomy 6:11). Deuteronomy 28 records a long list of ways that God promised to bless Israel:

And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock and the produce of your ground...the Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. (28:11-12)

Israel was to be unstoppable and rich beyond imagination. But there was only one catch:

...If you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them. (Deuteronomy 28:13-14)

Israel's inheritance of the land was tied to their submission and obedience to God's commands. Throughout their history as a nation, when they followed God, they experienced great blessing, but when they turned away, they experienced God's judgement. Eventually, their propensity to go their own way and refusal to bow to God's will resulted in the complete loss of their land and slavery in foreign lands. Even though they eventually regained their own land, they only briefly (approximately 40 years) ruled themselves without foreign overlords.

So as Jesus, their Messiah, began His public ministry, He reminds them of God's historical promise. Meekness—a humble, submissive spirit—was the requirement to find rest in the land. Many of the Jews in that day never saw beyond the promise of the physical land. Their stated goal was political sovereignty over their own land (Acts 1:6).

What they missed in this was that the original promise incorporated far more than just the land. "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 28:12). Jesus was literally this promise fulfilled. And what He offered was far more than freedom from political enemies. But just like in the past, they had to submit to God's authority.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

In another place, Jesus uses a different example. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:28). The requirement to receive the promise is a spirit of meekness—humbly accepting God's will and obediently following His commands. A life of peace, a life resting in the goodness of the promises of God awaits when we accept His challenge and humble ourselves before Him.

There we find joy.

The Joy of Humility

But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Psalm 37:11

Accepting God's Terms

Hebrews 11 is the celebrated "Heroes of the Faith" chapter. Through the accounts of the lives of those who went before us in the faith, the author builds an argument about the importance of living a life that prioritizes the will of God. In **Hebrews 11:13-16**, what are the reasons that they accepted God's challenge?

Ultimately, what kind of homeland were they searching for according to **verse 16**?

Notice God's attitude towards them in **verse 16**. What does that tell us about the importance of accepting God's challenge?

Hebrews 11:24-27 summarizes Moses' acceptance of God's challenge when he rejected life as an Egyptian and embraced life as a Jew. What were his motivations?

Based upon the testimony of these heroes in Hebrews 11, what does **Hebrews 12:1-2** encourage us to do?

As we look to Jesus, our ultimate example of meekness (v. 2), what promise of eventual peace do we see in the arc of His story?

As we see in the example of the Israelites, accepting God's challenge is only half the step to a life of peace and rest. The other steps are remaining committed and following through. In **1 Peter 5:6-9**, we are given some helpful instructions regarding this. Peter reminds us that we must be willing to:

1. Trust in God's _____.
2. Engage in _____.
3. Wait on God's _____.

Let's look at each of these in greater detail.



Trust in God's Faithfulness

In **Matthew 6:25-34**, Jesus discusses the promise God makes to us to care for us. What does God promise to provide for us?

Jesus provides two examples of God's faithful care. The first is the birds whom God feeds. What does Jesus point out that the birds never do?

There are, however, animals that do store up food, and even farm such as ants and bees (See **Proverbs 6:6; Proverbs 30:25**). How do we reconcile their dedication to the carefree spirit of the birds?

The second example Jesus provides is the beauty of nature. God grows beautiful wildflowers for no other reason than just because He wants to. They serve no purpose beyond beautifying our world. What does this tell us about God's view of beauty?

Does beautifying our world matter?

But just like we can be overly concerned with food, we can be overly concerned with beauty. How does the image of grass—here today, gone tomorrow—help us reconcile the importance we should place on beauty?

How do we compare to the birds in God's eyes?

Jesus goes so far as to say that the wildflowers surpass Solomon's glory. Sometimes we think that obedience to God's will means that we will miss out on the good things of life. But is that what He is actually saying?



What is the opposite of trust? What example does Jesus give to show how powerless it is?

What are we to prioritize above all else in life according to **Matthew 6:31- 34**?

What should our attitude be about the future?

Fight the Good Fight

While the Promise Land is often viewed as a symbol of rest, historically it was not for the Jews. First, they had to fight to acquire the land, and then they had to fight off those who would invade them. Even today, they have to fight to maintain their homeland. As Peter reminded us, the devil is constantly on the prowl trying to take us down, so we can't be complacent in our Christian lives. In **2 Corinthians 10:3-6**, Paul described the kind of warfare we are to pursue as Christians. How does it differ from that of world?

- It is not _____ but through _____. (v 4)
- It is directed at the _____ that stand against God's _____. (v. 5)
- It is _____ and _____ – taking every thought into captivity (v. 5)
- It is focused upon _____

Our warfare is different because our purpose is different. What kind of enemy are we fighting according to **Ephesians 6:12**?

How does this differ from the world's perspective of who we are fighting? How should the differences in our purpose change our interactions with those who hate us?

In **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**, what should be our motivation as we battle for God's truth in this world?

Fight Evil Ideas

Persuading men requires us to know the truth we are fighting for. **James 3:15-18** contrasts God's wisdom with Satan's wisdom. What characterizes each kind?

Satan's Wisdom	God's Wisdom

What is the fruit of righteousness and how does it grow in our world?



Act Upon the Truth

What does **James 1:22-25** warn us is will harm us in our fight for truth

This is why Paul encourages us in **Ephesians 6:13-17** to put on the armor God has given us as we engage in this battle.

Belt of _____

Shield of _____

Body armor of _____

Helmet of _____

Shoes of _____ from the Gospel

Sword of the Spirit _____

As we long for peace in this world, we cannot get tired of the fight. How does prayer give us the strength we need to keep fighting according to **Ephesians 6:18-20**?

- Pray _____
- Be _____ for every occasion that needs prayer
- Pray for _____
- Pray for the _____ of the Spirit as we witness
- Pray for _____ as we witness.

Wait on God's Reward

From a human standpoint, meekness is a total loss. The world believes in self-promotion and vanity. Someone once said, "If you don't toot your own trumpet, no one's going to toot it for you." Often this seems to work for people. But what did Jesus caution about this in **Matthew 6:1-2**?

In **Psalms 37:7-11**, what is promised to those who wait humbly on God?

A life of peace and rest comes in our humble dependence on God. We must depend on God to not only supply our needs, but also to fight for us and protect us in the spiritual battle that rages around us. Absolute peace will never come in this life, but in the next. For that we wait, diligently fighting the battle for God's truth and resting in the knowledge that God is in control.

Psalm 37:3-6 reminds us of this.

Trust in the Lord, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.

