

"The man who is meek is the man who is always angry at the right time, but who is never angry at the wrong time."

—William Barclay

10-Jul-20

Led Outside the Gate

[Meekness](#), we should understand, is not weakness. Though scoffed at by an assertive and bruising world, meekness demonstrates tremendous strength, for it is power under internal restraint. Meekness withholds force that could otherwise be brought to bear, keeping it in check for the right purpose, appropriate magnitude, and perfect time.

Jesus Christ's final day epitomizes such strength under flawless regulation. To the arresting mob seeking Jesus of Nazareth, He declared, "I AM," and those words, combined with the commanding presence and force of character of the One speaking, caused the troops and their officers to draw back and fall to the ground ([John 18:3-8](#)). It was a withering display of authority, yet less in magnitude than what it could have been.

He admonished Peter for needlessly injuring a servant with his sword, explaining that He could summon over twelve legions of angels to His defense if needed ([Matthew 26:50-53](#)). It was a rescue He could have called for but did not. Jesus possessed awesome authority, yet He used it solely for

doing His Father's will, even though that meekness included submitting Himself to the basest of men. Were it not for Jesus' assent, it would have been impossible for men to take His life ([John 10:17-18](#)).

Once arrested, this powerful Man permitted Himself to be led around, sent here and there like a common stock animal. Notice the repeated activity after His arrest: He was *led* to [Annas](#), one of the high priests ([John 18:13](#)). Annas then *sent* Him to Caiaphas, another high priest ([John 18:24](#)). He was *led* from Caiaphas to the Praetorium ([John 18:28](#)), the Roman headquarters for that region. After being questioned there by Pilate, He was *sent* back and forth between Pilate and Herod ([Luke 23:7](#), 11, 15). In [Matthew 27:1-2](#), Jesus was *led away* at the behest of the chief priests and elders. Finally, they "*led Him away to be crucified*" ([Matthew 27:31](#); see also [Mark 14:53](#); [15:1](#), 16; [Luke 23:26](#); emphasis ours throughout). During all this ignominy, He spoke few words, mounting the *meekest* of defenses—that is, He safeguarded the truth and His disciples but not Himself. He was *sent* and *led*, yet He retained His authority and dignity.

Christ's meekness shone brighter still when He was brought to the place of His crucifixion. The Judge of all mankind, who legally could have required the lives of all living, did more than just hold Himself in check. Of those who led Him and crucified Him, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" ([Luke 23:34](#)). By His words, He cleansed those who led Him and perpetrated His suffering rather than condemn them.

Where did His suffering take place? Not at the Praetorium, for they led him *from* there. Nor did it occur at the Temple. While scholars debate over the location and even the translation of "Golgotha" ([Matthew 27:33](#); [Mark 15:22](#); [John 19:17](#)), the writer of Hebrews provides a solid clue as to where Jesus died:

For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned *outside the camp*. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered *outside the gate*. ([Hebrews 13:11-12](#))

[God](#) instructed the priests to kill the sin offerings at the Tabernacle (or Temple), but He required them to burn the remains at a place "outside the

camp" ([Leviticus 4:12](#), 21), away from God's presence. This distant altar became known as the *miphkad* ("the appointed place") altar. At the time of [the crucifixion](#), this altar stood on a slope of the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple Mount, separated from the Temple environs by the Brook Kidron. The name of the Temple's eastern gate was, appropriately, the *miphkad gate*. When the priest performed a [sin offering](#), he took the body of the sacrificed animal through the *miphkad* gate, over the bridge that spanned the Kidron Valley, and to the appointed place for burning and disposal.

[Hebrews 13:11-12](#) ties this "outside the camp" location with Christ's crucifixion, being "outside the gate." Additionally, Jesus was crucified where the centurion with Him could see the veil of the Temple torn in two ([Luke 23:45-47](#)), which, because of the Temple walls, was possible from only a few angles and elevations—such as the area near the *miphkad* altar on the Mount of Olives, outside the gate, outside the "camp" of Jerusalem.

The *miphkad* gate and Kidron bridge had another significant purpose. History records that the gate and bridge were also used on the [Day of Atonement](#) (see Alfred Edersheim's *The Temple: Its Ministry and Service*). By this eastern route, the agent of the high priest—the "suitable man"—led the [azazel goat](#) out of the Temple and into the wilderness after the priest had laid on its head all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the nation (see [Leviticus 16:20-22](#)).

The centerpiece of the Day of Atonement ritual involved [two goats](#) as a sin offering ([Leviticus 16:5](#)). Some have wondered at the use of goats in the sacrificial system, given that goats are known for contrariness and stubbornness, while Christ, the object of all the offerings, had none of those traits. However, goats can also symbolize positive qualities of leadership, such as strong-mindedness, a commanding presence, and singleness of purpose—beneficial qualities where true meekness dwells, but destructive where self-interest rules.

In this context of genuinely meek leadership, we can see Jesus as a goat, particularly on His crucifixion day. As their Leader, He ensured the disciples kept their liberty, looking out for His charges rather than Himself ([John 18:8-9](#)). Though He submitted to being *sent* by the rulers and *led* by their agents, He was not pushed around. He courageously laid down His life; they did not

take it from Him. He maintained His dignity and bearing as a leader, only bowing His head when His life was over ([John 19:30](#)). Because He was meek, Christ exhibited the positive goat-like qualities without the negative traits, such as obstinance or defiance.

Consider how perfectly He fulfilled the roles of both goats in the Day of Atonement ceremony, as only He could. The Levitical high priest used the blood of the first goat to cleanse the sanctuary. The priest laid no sins on this goat; instead, he used its undefiled blood to cleanse and cover the incense altar and the Mercy Seat, which allowed rare access into the Holy of Holies ([Leviticus 16:15-16](#), 18-19). As the fulfillment, Jesus courageously and single-mindedly gave His sinless blood as a cleansing and a covering, providing us access into the heavenly Holy of Holies ([Hebrews 9:7](#), 12-14, 23-25).

The *azazel* goat, the one used for "complete removal," received the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the nation on its head, and it bore them, being sent by the high priest and led outside the camp, out of God's presence, as a representative of all the sins. In awe-inspiring fulfillment, the Father laid the iniquities of us all on Christ's dignified and undeserving head ([Isaiah 53:6](#)). Jesus permitted Himself to be sent by the leaders and led by their agents in true meekness, subsuming His well-being to what the Father desired for all mankind, even cleansing with His words those who led Him, just as the "ready man" was cleansed ([Leviticus 16:21](#), ESV).

Jesus became a substitutionary sacrifice, for God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" ([II Corinthians 5:21](#)). He became a curse on our behalf ([Galatians 3:13](#)) when they nailed Him to the tree. He, and He alone, bore our sins, iniquities, and transgressions ([Isaiah 53:11-12](#); [Hebrews 9:28](#); [I Peter 2:24](#)). He remained alive for torturous hours, bearing what belonged to us but permitted to be put on Himself, having been led outside the gate in perfect, divine meekness.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

Blessed Are the Meek

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Forgiving one's enemies is a defining mark of a real Christian. Andrew Jackson, after Dr. Edgar's persistent probing, finally displayed a tiny bit of one of the fruits of God's Spirit, prautes, or gentleness (meekness), possibly the second hardest fruit to develop, beginning with humbleness of mind and ending with longsuffering. In the apostle Paul's enumerations of Christian attributes, meekness always appears at near the end, reflecting the difficulty of attainment. Our modern understanding of meekness seems to be at variance with Paul's understanding of prautes. Sadly, language changes linguistic drift have degraded the original understanding, replacing it with "overly submissive and docile," tantamount to weakness and not having a backbone, a notion reinforced by Charles Wesley's hymn, Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild. The combined force of these connotations makes Jesus look like a doormat. The original denotation of the Greek prautes denoted a quiet confidence, strength, and self-composure, a sign of inner power and self-control, having trust and confidence in God. Meekness is the gentle, quiet spirit of selfless devotion to God, the very antithesis of arrogant pride. It is a quality prompted by God's Holy Spirit on the inside manifesting as graciousness on the outside. The meek person accepts what God is doing as a good thing. Meekness is humble submission to God, allowing us to bear injury without being turned emotionally inside out. Love is a major facet of meekness, a quality exemplified in Moses as he serenely shrugged off the abuses and slander from Miriam, Aaron, and other disgruntled, complaining Israelites. Jesus Christ exercised meekness in r

From the Archives: Featured Article

The Fruit of the Spirit: Meekness

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Meekness is not a virtue that people consider valuable or even desirable. But Jesus lists it as a primary virtue of one who will inherit His Kingdom, and Paul numbers it among the fruits of God's Spirit. Is there something to meekness that we have failed to grasp?

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