

THE MEEKNESS OF JESUS

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

A phase of the teaching of Jesus Christ which has been almost universally misunderstood and often misapplied is exemplified by the sayings, "The meek shall inherit the earth," and, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." These words have commonly been regarded as condoning and even encouraging what has been called a "calm, dishonorable, vile submission" to people and circumstances. As conveying this message, the words have been despised by many. For others, they have been an excuse for a weak, negative, abject attitude in their dealings with men and women. This latter stand was characteristic of the Medieval Period which properly has been called the Dark Ages.

Instead of arguing about the meaning of Jesus' words or jumping to conclusions regarding their message, as so many delight to do, we should examine the life and teachings of the Master. Thus shall we be able to observe a living example of his inspired message. Jesus always practiced what he preached: this alone sets him apart from common humanity and makes him the only perfect exemplar of Christianity. But, if we look closely into his life, we shall be amazed to find that anybody can follow his teachings easily if he will but seek to understand them.

By meekness and humility he could not possibly have meant submission to circumstances, people, or powers. He told the most prominent and powerful men of his day that they were no better than whited sepulchres. Single-handed, he drove the money-changers from the Temple and no man of them dared resist him. Time after time he reproved and upbraided the Pharisees who, he knew, would eventually kill him. Always he spoke with complete fearlessness and with an authority that left his opponents speechless.

Further, Jesus declared that he had overcome the world, and he instructed his disciples to "cast out devils; ... speak with new tongues; ... take up serpents; ... and lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." All this hardly sounds like the usual conception of meekness.

If we continue our examination, we discover that Jesus never claimed any power or privilege from himself that he did not claim for all men. He declared that he could of himself do nothing. He forbade anyone to call him "good" stating there was but One Good.

We learn, moreover, that Jesus was perfectly submissive always, not to the wills of men, but to the Divine Will; so much so, that he could pray, "Thy will be done." His cry, in the shadow of the cross, "O my Father, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," is the secret of his triumph. Jesus thus exemplified perfect meekness, which is first, the realization that of himself he could do nothing, because God is all; and, second, willingness to surrender his entire self to the Divine Purpose.

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WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT OF GOD?

By A. J. Truesdell

Is your God a God who makes you subject to some man-made theories, or doctrines, before you can receive the benefits and fulfilled promises of your God?

Remember, God is Principle. The Law operative within Principle works automatically to produce Good for any one looking to and trusting in it. It works much more rapidly for the little child with expressed or unexpressed desire, than it does for the most learned theologian who requires that the Principle, in element and in action, be strained through his particular concept before he is willing to accept its benefits.

No one has yet plumed the depth of God. Yet, every one is privileged to benefit by the Good that God is ready to bestow the moment one give attention to God. Man's idea of God expands and unfolds as he contemplates his Maker. Too, his personal development expands and extends in ratio to the steadfastness of his attention toward God.

One of the great differences between man and other animals is that man can direct the attention of his mind toward an objective and know he is doing it. Direction of movement in all animals is due to the power of visual perception. But in man alone this power, when it is translated into an inner visional perception, can be used to lift him above the realm of sense and appearance into that of thought and Spirit. By it, he can go straight to the throne of God, if he pleases.

"Thou canst not see Me with thy natural eye: I will give thee an eye divine. Behold My power as God!"

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GENTLENESS

By Nell Truesdell

One of the few Old Testament figures who could be said to possess the true spirit of gentleness was Jonathan, son of Saul, first King of Israel. About 1050 B.C. the Hebrew nation became a kingdom when Saul was anointed King by Samuel the Prophet and Judge of the people. The land of Canaan was not yet wholly occupied by the Israelites, consequently they were in a state of continuous warfare with the original occupants of the land. The LORD had given the territory to Moses; Joshua had led the children of Israel over the Jordan into the Promised Land, and from then on a holy war was waged continuously to possess it under the guidance and divine protection of the LORD.

When Saul was proclaimed King, warfare was necessary to the very existence of the Israelites, and his son Jonathan, like other young men of his day, was

occupied in its pursuit. Even though Jonathan was a warrior, the quality of gentleness can be read into his life-history all through his brief career.

Always in the background (where he receded so that his tempestuous father, who would have failed at every turn had it not been for the cooperation of his valiant son), he seems to be content to be the means to an end without any recognition whatsoever. Never a word of protest came from this gentle man who, in the face of death itself, was able to hold himself guileless and strong.

When Saul had reigned two years, he organized his army to fight against the Philistines, taking two thousand men unto himself and giving one thousand to Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. With this small army, Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the enemy were thrown into panic.

Saul, however, took full credit for this victory. He had trumpets sounded and word carried through all Israel that he had won the battle. We have no sign from Jonathan that he was disturbed by this assumption on the part of his father.

Eventually the Philistines massed thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and a multitude of people as the sands on the seashore, and pitched their tents in Michmash. When the Israelites saw they were closed in tight, they feared, and hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in pits, and in high places, and some of the Hebrews even went across the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead.

In the course of events when defeat, so far as the Israelites were concerned, seemed imminent, Jonathan, without the knowledge of his father, took his armor-bearer and set out to attack the Philistines single-handed, while Saul, with but six hundred men left of his whole army, tarried in Gibeah under a pomegranate tree.

Jonathan, with the confidence of youth, said to the young man that bare his armor, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us; for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few."

So this genius at strategy, with only another young man to accompany him, set himself to storm the enemy and rout them. He did it by climbing a high and very steep cliff. The enemy were so surprised, and so sure that no man without an army at his heels would dare attack them from this point, that they fell before the sword and, after about twenty men were slain in an area of a half-acre, the whole host in the field, looking upward, trembled. Just then an earthquake shook the ground and the entire multitude melted away in panic, beating down one another as they retreated.

Traitor Israelites who had allied themselves with the Philistines again joined with their brothers. Even men who had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard the Philistines had fled, followed hard after them in the battle.

When Saul received report of the rout, Jonathan and his armor bearer were absent from camp. To secure total victory for himself and Israel, superstitious Saul made an oath that no man, under penalty of death, was to taste food that day. Jonathan, who was not present to hear the edict, in the course of fighting saw some honeycomb and ate thereof and was strengthened. When he was told of

the curse that was upon anyone who tasted food, he said, "My father hath troubled the land; ... how much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found?"

Eventually the people desperately hungry by compliance with Saul's oath, were so faint from continuous fighting, that when they reached Aijalon, they flew upon the spoil, slew sheep, oxen and calves, and ate them with the blood, which, under the Law, was forbidden of any Jew. When Saul found out this sin, he would not rest until he discovered who was the cause of it. Lots were cast, and Jonathan was found guilty of disobeying his father's oath, of which, we remember, he had no knowledge.

Though Jonathan had repeatedly risked his life and had, single-handed, turned the tide of battle in favor of the Israelites, Saul was not big enough to withdraw the penalty. When Saul demanded, "Tell me what thou hast done," Jonathan said, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo, I must die."

But the people came to Jonathan's rescue and said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day."

So Jonathan was saved. With no accusation against his father for demanding his death because he had inadvertently broken a decree he receded into the background and let his father take all the glory for the victory against the enemies of Israel. Jonathan could not have reacted so graciously in the face of gross injustice if he had not been gentle in spirit.

Other instances in his life reveal the tolerant spirit peering forth. Not much is recorded about this valiant young person, but what is written depicts a courteous and benign disposition that cares little for personal glory in his willingness to help get a job done.

Another incident worth mentioning is this: after David, an intrepid stripling shepherd from the hills, came to a battle-ground to deliver to his brothers food sent by Jesse, their father, and accepted the challenge of Goliath, the giant of Gath, and slew him in the name of the LORD of hosts, he was brought before Saul to recount the episode. As he told the story, his love for the God of Israel was revealed to be paramount in his mind. Armed only by faith, he was able to overcome a formidable enemy and rout an entire army.

The Biblical account reads thus: "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

As time went by, Saul became insanely jealous of the people's love for David; but Jonathan never feared David's popularity. He defended David at every turn, even though David's success threatened his own succession to the throne. Jonathan proved again and again the spirit of gentleness that reveals such a deep sense of appreciation for what is superior that it cannot interpose self-interest between it and his possible personal gains.

He must have realized that if David increased he and his father must decrease. But David was the one person in his life to whom his love went out in uncalculating friendship. Perhaps the deepest reason for this love toward David was that Jonathan himself loved the LORD with an unflagging devotion and

recognized the same trait within David. Both young men had kept close to God at all times. Saul, on the other hand, had proved his vacillation by asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD.

Jonathan's love for this friend was so great that he stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle.

In the fulness of time Saul and Jonathan were slain on the same battle field in one day. When David, in another part of the country, received the news, his song of lamentation is a beautiful tribute which reveals his love for both father and son.

"Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. ... O Jonathan, ... I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

So we close the story of a man who moved in an inconspicuous manner in the background of a developing kingdom, but whose gentleness and love stand as beacon lights on the sea of humanity. Jonathan is a charming figure who shows how great the soul of a man can be when it forgets self interest.

A thousand years later, another man appeared on the scene in the history of Israel, with a spirit so great that he has towered above all greatness before or since his time. Jesus Christ had the gentle spirit in such proportions that he could ignore human crassness and demonstrate a perfection of spirit that put to shame all enemies who attacked him.

But there were pleasant episodes in his life also, that show how kind and considerate he was. You remember the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus was talking to a group of men, for it was customary for a teacher to address only men. Publicans and sinners drew near to hear what he had to say. Jesus talked simply about what the men understood best: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" Every man listening either owned a few sheep, or had tended sheep at some time. All recognized the point in the story and doubtless were uplifted by the implied promise that even men branded as publicans and sinners by the orthodox Jew had a chance in the kingdom of heaven.

Women, too, hovered on the out-skirts of the crowd of men pressing close to the Master. Their hearts hungered for a freedom no man understood, for women in those days were chattels. The kingdom of which Jesus spoke seemed like an unattainable abode of bliss, a paradise forever denied the female of the species. But Jesus, in all his gentleness of spirit, recognized their heart-longing and spoke to them direct, over the heads of the men packed close about: "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?"

Such courtesy to females! and in public at that, had never yet been experienced! How the hearts of the women must have warmed; and perhaps the hearts of the men softened a bit.

In other instances, the innate compassion of Jesus Christ gleamed in a background of human darkness. When he chanced upon the widow of Nain mourning outside the city gates for her dead son, his own heart must have remembered his mother Mary and her sorrow that he, Jesus had left home (was as one dead) to pursue his career as Teacher. He restored the boy to life; and we know surely the human heart of that widow was made gloriously happy.

In his dealings with his disciples, he was always gentle and kind. They must have at times in their blundering ignorance irritated him sorely; but he quietly repeated his instructions and led them slowly ever upward to a clearer understanding of his true mission in this world.

As we look about today, we can see how some gentle spirit stands back of every man's or every woman's success in this world. We cannot always trace the inconspicuous power of the quiet presence that furthers the interests of flourishing personalities, but it is there none the less. It might be the gentle mother in a household; or a self-effacing wife or daughter or sister who furnishes the power that drives a man onward and upward above his associates. On the other hand, it might be the doting father or tolerant husband who lifts a woman to heights in the business or professional world.

Numberless lives who are outstanding successes in the world owe their powers of achievement to some gentle soul who stands back of them as friend and counselor. The quiet prayers of mothers for their sons; the willingness to do the unsavory tasks that another might be free -- we cannot tell always where the credit should go.

But in our own hearts we can glorify God, the very spirit of gentleness and friendship, who gives in to our every whim and turns our willfulness to advantage in order to save us from destroying ourselves.

Frequently all of us sin against God in that we storm and rail at him for not giving us the things we demand, when all the while his compassion toward us keeps us free and untrammelled. As we look back over our lives, how grateful we are for having been saved the burden of some demonstration we demanded at a given time; how delighted we are that some of the awful prayers we made before the Most High had not been answered.

Each of us is his own enemy; but God, the Friend, stands by ever ready to save us from ourselves. And so, God in those around us, reaches out toward us to soothe, help, and heal, bless and prosper. This cooperation among humankind is its salvation. Without it, the race would destroy itself.

The spirit of compassion in Jonathan is a beautiful example of love among men. The still more beautiful Spirit of One greater than Jonathan continues to be a guiding light for all men and women to set the pattern of their lives in this world. That love leads us to the very throne of God. That tolerance over looks our smallness; it elevates us in our own estimation so that we take a new measure of ourselves and start over a higher path toward the kingdom of God.

The noble spirit is present in all. It needs only be recognized to spring out of darkness into light, to show itself as the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world. The gentleness of Jesus is a strength in any man that continues to lift him above himself and prepare him as joint-heir with Christ to the kingdom.

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Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

February 1948

2. ARRAY thyself with glory and beauty.
3. BEHOLD the things that are in heaven.
4. CONTINUE in the grace of God.
5. DELIGHT in the law of God, after the inward man.
6. EARNESTLY contend for the faith.
7. FAITH cometh by hearing.

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9. Do not frustrate the GRACE of GOD.
10. Let the HOUSE of God be builded.
11. INHERIT the Kingdom of God.
12. See His face with JOY.
13. Speak what thou KNOWEST.
14. LEAVE thy LABOR to Him.

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16. Be transformed as the MINISTERS of righteousness.
17. The Lord is NIGH.
18. OWE no man anything.
19. PROVE the sincerity of your love.
20. QUENCH not the spirit.
21. We are RISEN and stand upright.

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23. He would SHOW thee the SECRETS of wisdom.
24. God hath given you TREASURE.
25. Be profitable UNTO God.
26. Thou shalt be VISITED of the Lord.
27. His hands make WHOLE.
28. YOURS is the Kingdom of God.

Constructive words combined with willing attention God-ward produce all the Good any one can ask or desire of the Father. Please keep the DAILY MEDITATIONS with us.