

one

The second Beatitude is Blessed are the Meek.

Jesus said, “Learn from me for I am meek and humble in heart.”

The Poor in Spirit corresponds to humility; then comes meekness.

What is the first thing you think of when I say “meekness”?

You think of weakness.

But meekness is just the opposite of weakness. It is the calm strength that harnesses the power of anger and directs it to good.

Anger is a God given emotion, it’s a natural feeling. It’s a feeling that is meant to prompt us to correct some evil. But for most of us, the anger that’s supposed to correct some evil normally ends up destroying some good instead.

Anger is meant to be constructive – it’s meant to give us energy to fix problems. The vice of anger is the sin whereby our anger causes us to create problems and destroy things.

two

Anger is always sinful when it’s not constructive

But that also means it’s sinful when it’s disproportionate to the situation. If your anger is too intense or lasts too long, if you blow up regularly, if you have a short fuse, if people tiptoe around you, then you’re guilty of vicious anger. And probably, in those cases, your anger isn’t so much based on responding to an evil around you – it’s how you try to get your way.

Remember – the saints always had thick skin. It was always hard, usually impossible, to offend them. So, if you take offense easily, you’re on the wrong track.

A final mark of sinful anger is when it’s directed to an evil it’s not your place to correct. When my kids were young they were constantly correcting each other, and my wife and I had to say to them: “You’re not the parent. You worry about yourself. We’ll handle the parenting.”

The point is if you’re getting angry about things that are not under your authority or things you can’t change and that you *have no right to* change – well, how can that anger be constructive? So are you always getting angry about the decisions of political authorities or Church authorities? What good is that kind of anger going to do anyone? Why worry about the decisions you can’t make? The point of anger is to help you carry out the decisions that are within the scope of your authority.

three

Meekness is the virtue, the calm strength that harnesses the power of anger and uses it for good.

Unfortunately, until now, you thought meekness meant weakness – but it is just the opposite.

The word meek comes from the Greek word “praus” (prah-oos), which means strength under control. It was used to define a horse trained for battle. Wild stallions were brought down from the mountains and broken for riding. Some were used to pull wagons, some were raced, but the best were trained for warfare. They retained their fierce spirit, courage, and power, but were disciplined to respond to the slightest nudge or pressure of the rider’s leg. They could gallop into battle at 35 miles per hour and come to a sliding stop at a word. They were not frightened by arrows, spears, or torches. Later in history these horses charged into the face of exploding cannons as Lord Tennyson expressed in his poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade.”

The war horse had ‘power under authority,’ ‘strength under control.’ A war horse never ceased to be determined, strong and passionate. However, it learned to bring its nature under the discipline of its rider. It gave up being out of control and rebellious.

To understand the meek picture a great stallion at full gallop on a field of battle, who—at his master’s voice—seizes up to an instant halt, awaiting the next order.

We don’t want to get rid of the power of anger – just harness it for good. Meekness is the calm strength that harnesses the power of anger.

four

We harness the power of anger and become meek by two steps: Check and Command

When the emotion of anger begins to rage - check it, like a hockey player – checking an opponent into the boards. Check the anger that is getting out of control – stop it. Then command the right response. What do I mean by this? When you face something which causes anger:

- I. Stop and think before you react.
 - a. Ask yourself, what do I really want in the end: A wake of destruction, to burn relationships and bridges, vengeance, just to look like an idiot who is out of control? No. I want union with God; to love him and to love my neighbor and even enemies. Keep that in the front of your mind.
 - b. Then think: What can I do in this situation?
 - II. If there is something you can or should do, then Act – Do what you can – Change what is possible.
 - III. If this thing is not your responsibility or there is nothing you can do, it is beyond my control, then stay calm and stay out of it.

Remember – when anger rises – check and command.

five

The virtue of meekness is wonderfully captured by this prayer of Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you
Everything passes / God never changes
Patience / Obtains all
Whoever has God / Wants for nothing
God alone is enough.

Practice that and you will be meek!