

Handout Lesson 7: The Letter of St. James

The Greek word primary root *praus*, [pronounced prah-ooce’], means mild, humble, or meek [see Strong’s # 4239]. This word only appears four times in the Greek New Testament: three times in Matthew [5:5; 11:29; 21:5] and once in 1 Peter 3:4. In both Matthew 11:29 and 21:5 Jesus Himself is called “meek” just as the prophet Moses is called “meek” or *praus* in Numbers 12:3 in the Septuagint Old Testament translation: “*Now, Moses himself was by far the meekest on the face of the earth.*” Numbers 12:3 [Strong’s # 6035, in Hebrew *anav*, and in the Greek Septuagint translation the word is *praus*; *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd, London, 8th reprinting 1999; page 190]. Christians redefined this word giving it a quality expressing an inward virtue that is related primarily to God. Christian “meekness” is based on humility which is expressed in the New Testament as **the supernatural quality that is the outgrowth of a renewed nature**. This renewal can only come when we surrender our human will and submit to God’s divine will in our lives.

In addition to the beatitude in Matthew 5:5: *Blessed are the meek...*; this Greek word for “meek,” *praus*, is only found in the New Testament passages of:

Matthew 11:29-30	<i>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.</i>
Matthew 21:5	<i>Say to daughter Zion, ‘Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.</i>
1 Peter 3:4	<i>...but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle [meek] and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God.</i>

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Positive aspects of jealousy in Scripture:

- God is jealous of our love (Ex 20:5)
- the faithful are jealous of God's good name (1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ez 39:25).
- Jesus was jealous of protecting what belonged to His Father (Mt 21:13; Jn 2:16-17; CCC# 584).
- St. Paul was jealous for the salvation of believers (2 Cor 11:2-3).
- And St. James' statement of the Holy Spirit's jealous longing for redeemed man: *Anyone who chooses the world for a friend is constituted an enemy of God. Can you not see the point of the saying in Scripture, 'The longing of the spirit he sent to dwell in us is a jealous longing.'* Jm 4:4-5

Negative aspects of jealousy/envy in Scripture:

- *The life of the body is a tranquil heart, but envy is a cancer in the bones* (Prov 14:30).
- *Cruel is wrath, overwhelming is anger; but jealousy, who can withstand that?* (Pro 27:4).
- (concerning Jesus) *For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over* (Mt 27:18).
- *Pilate answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?' For he realized it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over* (Mk 15:9-10).
- St. Paul writing of sinners who are in rebellion against God: *In other words, since they would not consent to acknowledge God, God abandoned them to their unacceptable thoughts and indecent behavior. And so now they are steeped in all sorts of injustice, rottenness, greed and malice; full of envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite...* (Rom 1:28-29).

In the Biblical sense jealousy is a certain sorrow over what one does not have that another has. But the root of envy, the negative side of jealousy, is malice toward the one who possesses what the other does not have. In this sense it is envy that made those opposed to Jesus hate Him and desire His death. It was envy that caused Cain to kill Abel because he did not have God's approval and Abel did. It is envy that James identifies as the opposite of Godly wisdom that is the bitter fruit which leads to sin and death. This is not the kind of wisdom, James warns: *But if at heart you have the bitterness of jealousy, or selfish ambition, do not be boastful or hide the truth with lies; this is not the wisdom that comes from above, but earthly, human and devilish* (James 3:15).

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