

The Warrior Horse

My sweet wife was reading her Bible in preparation for a Bible class and the material directed her to a Greek term, *praus*, translated “meek” in our Bible. We began to research it together and it turns out that this term was used by the Greek military to describe a wild horse that had been broken for use as a battle mount.

Having cowboied a bit in my earlier years (I broke my own colt, Bea), I got interested in this concept and was particularly selective when breaking my horse. There are several theories about how to break a horse. For years, breaking a horse meant jumping astride a snorting, psychotic sack of feral fury and hanging on for dear life until the excited equine just basically gave up. Then you had a horse you could saddle and ride... kinda; they would ride but often resented it. This method is the origin of the 8-second bronc-ride of rodeo fame. Of course, these horses are retired if they ever quit bucking (an irony I’ve yet to grasp, much like the reason for riding a bull – what’s the end game again?). Anyway, most equine experts now argue for an improved method that begins with patient handling of the horse to gain their confidence without breaking their spirit. Eventually, that relationship rendered a spirited animal that wanted to perform at its peak.

The term “meek” is usually associated with “weak.” When applied as the Greek warriors used it, nothing could be more inaccurate. They weren’t breaking these horses to render them broken-down, spiritless nags worthy of nothing more challenging than a plug pulling a cart, they desired hard chargers that were so controlled that the mere shift in weight could signal a change of gait, gentle pressure from one leg or the other could signal direction and low, steady words would put a horse on alert for immediate action. In the Old Testament, horses were a sign of status (Ecclesiastes 10:7) and power (Jeremiah 8:16), not timidity. The idea of control under pressure aptly fits the meaning of “meek” when applied in the context of these warrior horses.

In God’s prediction of the kind of people He would restore to Israel after their Divine humbling, the element of meekness would be key. *“I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord”* (Zephaniah 3:12). God does not want a broken-spirited people whose timidity keeps them from doing His will, He wants a people whose dedication is such that they are completely under His control and anxious to obey. His warrior horse is the consummate servant, ever listening for the instruction of His Word, ready to spring into action when directed by His Divine guidance and always confident that the One who holds the reigns of our life will guide us safely through this war we wage against the evil of the day.