

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.Ivor J.W. Oakley (Guisborough Evangelical Church
21-5-2000)

Matthew 5:4,5
(Bible Reading Psalm 51:1-12)

The Mourner and the Meek

Introduction

Review – the Sermon on the Mount contains perfect summary of character and conduct of those who belong to Christ. The Beatitudes describe Christian's character, the spiritual state of the man who can obey the Sermon. They describe people depending on God's grace and power in their lives. Not natural tendencies, because produced by the Holy Spirit, revealing difference between Christian and non-Christian.

They are in a definite order, like jewels made into a chain, not flung down in a heap. The first and foundation beatitude we looked at last week, and the rest follow logically on from the last. **Blessed are the poor in spirit** (Matt 5:3) spoke of poverty and need. This is the condition everyone must reach before they can receive God's blessings – salvation, guidance, filling of Spirit, support and companionship. Those who are broken first know blessing. So when man is poor in spirit, he then mourns.

Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted (5:4)

Happy are the unhappy. Sounds total nonsense. Mourning, grief, funerals – make us want to run away as fast as we can. This verse is not talking about these things. The world bids us to forget these things, to eat, drink and be merry. "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone". Whole organisation of life, pleasure mania, and entertainment industry - all provide means of escape from mourning and sadness.

Reason for Jesus' statement is not about death of loved one and therefore grief (though secondary application), but arises from previous statement about being poor in spirit. Faced with weakness, bankruptcy, sin, and seeing how sin has affected relationship with God and caused the death of Christ, causes us to mourn over sin. It is an offence to God, causes damage to others and rings us into bondage.

The closer we walk with God, the more sensitive we become, the more we realise indwelling sin. A civil war inside our breast. Flesh versus spirit. Never realised this before converted. Back then, life was pleasant, easy going and carefree. Sometimes awareness of sin comes suddenly and with overwhelming force some while after becoming a Christian. Leads often to a second and unmistakable deeper experience.

If know nothing of this, and think this is being morbid, have to ask do we know anything of God's work in life at all? What do we know of self-crucifixion and confession of sin, if we never mourn because of our state? Being a Christian and filled with Spirit does not mean wearing a perpetual inane grin on face, and always being

boisterous and bubbly and full of beans. There is such a thing as Christian tears, and too few shed them, such is the superficiality of our experience.

Paradox of Christian experience – deep sorrow and yet unspeakable joy. Like the Saviour who mourned, but had deep joy within. Christian can be sorrowful but not miserable, serious but not solemn, grave but not cold and distant.

And we do mourn over church and its state? Compare it with days of greatness in the past. Then look at it now, with its coldness, indifference, half-heartedness, disloyalty, people putting so many other things in supreme place excluding God, lack of self-denial, and neglect of real prayer. So often people not mourning over state of the church, preferring to give impression of being bright and jolly, though all contrived and manufactured. This is not something that can be cured by evangelistic campaigns and the larger than life personality of the evangelist. The more we refuse to face reality and excuse selves, the longer we postpone blessing. In the old days, when things were not going well, there was a day of prayer and fasting, asking God to humble the church and show what was wrong and where the sin was which was hindering it, the sin which needed to be confessed and put right.

Do we mourn over the sin of the world? Read papers and watch the news. Answer? Shrug of shoulders with “so what?”? Or are we disgusted and critical? Do we grieve and mourn that men and women, made for fellowship with God and harmony with one another, live and behave as they do? The blindness and folly and evil of it all. Jesus mourned over the world. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.... How often I have longed to gather your children together... but you were not willing** (Matt. 23:37). Paul wept too **And now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ** (Phil. 3:18). R. M. McCheyne said that Scotland’s deepest need was a baptism of tears. D.L. Moody lamented that there were too many dry-eyed prayer meetings.

Urgent need to mourn over selves, state of Christian church, and state of the world. **They will be comforted.** God’s perfect answer, as always, is his son – now and hereafter. **Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption** (1 Cor. 1:30). Why should I mourn over my sins? Because they cost Christ’s precious blood. Why should I mourn over indwelling sin? Because Christ is our holiness. Why should I mourn over the sins of the church? Because of God’s reviving and renewing grace in this life, and second coming at the end. **When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is** (1 John 3:2). Why should I mourn over the state of the world? Apart from revival, there is no answer until the end when there is **A new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness** (2 Peter 3:13).

The answer to need for comfort is Christ at every stage. The Spirit of God was on him **To bind up the broken-hearted** (Isaiah 61:1). Isaiah was quoted in Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:18). Comfort begun on earth and to be completed in heaven when **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes** (Rev.7: 17). Want to know real consolation and joy? Begin by mourning over sin. Negative before positive. Deeper awareness of sin will move the heart to be driven back on Christ, and the more real his comfort. Higher consequent joy. More we despair of self, the more we know of his consolation, and the more we know of joy unspeakable. Brokenness is the way to

blessedness. Wise prayer request – “Pray only one thing for me – that I may always be broken”.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth (5:5)

When man is poor in spirit because he realizes his nothingness and poverty before God, he then mourns over his condition. The result is he becomes meek. This does not mean weak, or easy-going, or peace at any price, agree with anyone and challenge no one, or smoothing things over, anything for a quiet life. Meekness is compatible with great strength, authority, firmness and decisiveness. Meekness comes from a true view of self – realisation of what he is, not proud of self or glory in self or assert self. Not insistent on his rights, position, privileges, possessions or status in life. Not always watching self and own interests. Not always on the defensive, or worrying about what people are thinking or saying. Not sorry for himself or pitying himself. In fact, knowing what he knows about himself, he is amazed that God and men think as well as they do about him, and treat him as well as they do. People denounce him and he can tell “You’re right, and I could tell you even worse”.

The story goes of a minister in an acrimonious deacons’ meeting. Many accusations. He declared “You are right. Let’s ask God to forgive”. A prayer of confession followed. When the minister got off his knees, not one deacon left the room.

So in relation to God. The meek man simply submits self to God. Accepts his will and dealings with him. “Let go, and let God”. Responds to least touch of God’s hand. Totally depends on God. Surrenders to Holy Spirit. Leaves everything in God’s hands – his safety, rights, cause, reputation, whole future – grateful for all. Enjoys life. Complete absence of asserting self against God, or kicking against his will.

So in dealing with others – he does not assert self or his rights. Controls temper. His tongue is in submission. Forbearing. Envy, jealousy and resentment at others disappear. Retaliation and getting his own back are not in his book. Rudeness, aggressiveness and quarrelling are not his mark. Sees good in others if he can. But does he never speak up and protest? Does he never challenge and disagree with wrong? He accepts wrong against himself, but he does not accept wrong against his fellow men. Can get very angry at injustice and cruelty to others. Speaks up for claims of God on people’s lives, and if people are failing the Lord, he will defend the Lord’s interest. He will challenge. “Very nice and gracious, but he can be straight with you and tell you when you’re wrong”. But he will do it in a particular way. **If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently** (A.V. has “spirit of meekness”) (Gal. 6:1). The Greek word Paul uses here is *πραυτητος*, compared with Matthew’s *πραεις* in Matt. 5:3, 11:29), concerned with Lord’s honour and not with asserting himself.

Outstanding examples in the Bible: Abraham’s allowing nephew Lot to have first choice of the land (Gen. 13:8); Moses could have all pleasures and treasures of the great, but chose God’s will, though costly (Hebrews 11:24-25); David refusing to take Saul’s life when he was in his power (1 Sam. 24:6); Lord Jesus **When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate, when he suffered, he made no threats** (1 Peter 2:23).

Meekness will be rewarded. **They will inherit the earth.** Leaving everything to God, we can be satisfied and content for we will enjoy everything we need. **God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will** (Romans 12:2). **I learnt to be content whatever the circumstances... I can do everything through him who gives me strength** (Phil. 4:11-13). The meek man is always satisfied and content, always comes up rejoicing, because he is delivered from tensions, discontent and the anger of non-Christians. **The peace of God, which transcends all understanding** (Phil 4:7). **Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.** (1 Peter 5:6-7). **All things are yours.. and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God** (1 Cor. 3:21-23). **Heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory** (Romans 8:17).

Meekness distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian. All born with self very much at the centre and in control. The world's mark is aggressiveness, self-assurance, boasting, big show, great numbers, push and force, throwing weight about. Meekness is not a natural quality, wrought in man by Holy Spirit in new birth, and continues as Holy Spirit continues to control that life. Indeed the word comes up again as part of the fruit of the Spirit *πραυτης* (Galatians 5:23) (A.V. translates as "meekness", NIV translates as "gentleness").

We do not know ourselves until God deals with us and continues to deal with us. Then we have the mind of Christ, and we become a new creation with new attitudes and new outlook. Finish with self, which is the cause of all our troubles. Does Christ wholly possess us? Has he enabled us to see ourselves as we really are? Displaced self from the centre? **Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ** (2 Cor. 2:14). Is life to us a triumphal procession in Christ? **[If we endure, we will also reign with him** (2 Tim. 2:12). Do we truly reign with Christ? **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls** (Matt. 11:28-29).