Blessed are they that mourn. Matthew 5:4

Pink:

‘Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted’ (v. 4).

1. Mourning is hateful and irksome to poor human nature: from suffering and sadness our spirits instinctively shrink. It is natural for us to seek the society of the cheerful and joyous. The verse now before us presents an anomaly to the unregenerate, yet is it sweet music to the ears of God’s elect: if ‘blessed’ why do they ‘mourn’? If they mourn, how can they be blessed? Only the child of God has the key to this paradox, for ‘happy are they who sorrow’ is at complete variance with the world’s logic. Men have, in all places and in all ages, deemed the prosperous and the gay to be the happy ones, but Christ pronounces blessed those who are poor in spirit and who mourn.

2. Now it is obvious that it is not every species of mourning which is here referred to. There are thousands of mourners in the world today who do not come within the scope of our text: those mourning over blighted hopes, over financial reverses, over the loss of loved ones.

3. The ‘mourning’ of our text is a spiritual one. They who mourn thus are blessed because the Spirit of God has wrought a work of grace within them, and hence they have been awakened to see and feel their lost condition. They are ‘blessed’ because God does not leave them at that point: ‘they shall be comforted. There must be a real sense of sin before the remedy for it will even be desired.

4. Take the woman of Luke 7, who washed the Savior’s feet with her tears. Take the prodigal in Luke 15: before he left the far country he said, ‘I will arise and go unto my Father and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, And am no more worthy to be called Thy son’. Take the publican of Luke 18: why did he ‘smite upon his breast’ and say ‘God be merciful to me a Sinner’? Because he felt the plague of his own heart. So of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost: they were ‘pricked in their heart, and cried out.’ This ‘mourning’ springs from a sense of sin, from a tender conscience, from a broken heart. It is a godly sorrow over rebellion against God and hostility to His will. This ‘mourning’ is the agonizing realization that it was my sins which nailed to the Cross the Lord of glory. When Israel shall, by faith, see Christ, ‘they shall mourn for Him’ (Zech. 12:10). It is such tears and groans which prepare the heart to truly welcome and receive the ‘balm of Gilead,’ the comfort of the Gospel. It is, then, a mourning over the felt destitution of our spiritual state, and over the iniquities that have separated between us and God. Such mourning always goes side by side with conscious poverty of spirit.

5. But this ‘mourning’ is by no means to be confined unto the initial experience of conviction and contrition, for observe the tense of the verb: it is not “have mourned,” but “mourn”—a present and continuous experience. The Christian himself has much to mourn over. The sins which he now commits—both of omission and commission—are a sense of daily grief to him, or should be, and will be, if his conscience is kept tender. An ever-deepening discovery of the depravity of his flesh and the sea of corruption within—ever polluting all that he does—deeply exercises him. Consciousness of the surgings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the coldness of his love, and his paucity of fruit, make him mourn.
6. The fact is that the closer the Christian lives to God, the more will he mourn over all that dishonors Him: with the Psalmist he will say, ‘Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law’ (Ps. 119:53).

7. But let us return to the primary thought of our verse: ‘Blessed are they that mourn’ has immediate reference to the convicted soul sorrowing over his sins. And here it is most important to note that Christ does not pronounce them ‘blessed’ simply because they are mourners. True comfort is not to be found in anything in self—no, not in perceiving our own vileness—but in Christ alone. Distress of soul is by no means always the same thing as evangelical repentance, as is clear from the case of Cain (Gen. 4:13). But where the Spirit produces in the heart a godly sorrow for sin, He does not leave him there, but brings him to look away from sin to the Lamb of God, and then he is ‘comforted.’

8. ‘They shall be comforted.’ This gracious promise receives its fulfillment, first, in that Divine consolation which immediately follows repentance, namely the removal of that conscious load of guilt which lies as an intolerable burden on the conscience. It finds its accomplishment in the Spirit’s application of the Gospel of God’s grace to the one whom He has convicted of his dire need of the Savior. Then it is that Christ speaks the word of power, ‘Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28)—observe that His language clearly presupposes the feeling of sin to be a “burden” as that which impels to Him for relief; it is to the sin-sick heart that Christ gives rest. This “comfort” issues in a sense of a free and full forgiveness through the merits of the atoning blood of Christ. This Divine comfort is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, filling the heart of one who is now assured that he is ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ First God wounds and then heals.

9. Second, there is a continual “comforting” of the mourning saint by the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter.
   a. The one who sorrows over his departures from Christ is comforted by the assurance that ‘if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9).
   b. The one who mourns under the chastening rod of God is comforted by the promise, ‘afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby’ (Heb. 12:11).
   c. The one who grieves over the awful dishonor done to his Lord in the religious world is comforted by the fact that Satan’s time is short, and soon Christ will bruise him beneath His feet.

10. Third, the final “comfort” is when we leave this world and are done with sin for ever. Then shall “sorrow and sighing flee away.” To the rich man in hell, Abraham said of the one who had begged at his gate, ‘now he is comforted’ (Luke 16:25). The best wine is reserved for the last. The “comfort” of heaven will more than compensate for all the “mourning” of earth.

From all that has been before us learn, first, to find consolation, view the purging and healing blood of Christ. Then there is the inseparable connection between godly sorrow and godly joy: compare Psalms 30:5; 126:5; Proverbs 14:10; Isaiah 61:3; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; James 2:13.
Watson:

Here are eight steps leading to true blessedness. They may be compared to Jacob’s Ladder, the top whereof reached to heaven. We have already gone over one step, and now let us proceed to the second: ‘Blessed are they that mourn’.

1. Mourning were a sad and unpleasant subject to treat on, were it not that it has blessedness going before, and comfort coming after. Mourning is put here for repentance. It implies both sorrow, which is the cloud, and tears which are the rain distilling in this golden shower; God comes down to us.

2. The words fall into two parts, first, an assertion that mourners are blessed persons; second, a reason, because they shall be comforted.

But will all mourning entitle a man to blessedness? No, there is a carnal mourning which is far from making one blessed. ‘The sorrow of the world worketh death’ (2 Corinthians 7: 10).

There are two objects of spiritual mourning, sin and misery. There is also mourning for our own sins and the sins of others.

1. Our sin. Sin must have mourning. Every sinner is to be tried for his life and is sure to be cast if mercy does not become an advocate for him.

2. The pollution of sin. Sin is a plague spot, and will you not labor to wash away this spot with your sorrow? But every mourning for sin is not sufficient to entitle a man to blessedness.

What is not the right gospel-mourning for sin, and what is the right gospel-mourning for sin?

What is not the right gospel-mourning for sin? There is a mourning which is false and spurious. What is the right gospel-mourning? That mourning which will entitle a man to blessedness has these qualifications:

1. It is spontaneous and free. It must come as water out of a spring, not as fire out of a flint. Mourning for sin must be like the myrrh which drops from the tree freely without cutting or forcing. Mary Magdalene’s repentance was voluntary. She came to Christ with ointment in her hand, with love in her heart, with tears in her eyes.

2. Gospel-mourning is spiritual; that is, when we mourn for sin more than suffering. A sinner mourns because judgment follows at the heels of sin, but David cries out, ‘My sin is ever before me’ (Psalm 51: 3). God had threatened that the sword should ride in circuit in his family, but David does not say, “The sword is ever before me”, but ‘My sin is ever before me’. The offence against God troubled him.

3. We must mourn for sin as it is a piece of the highest ingratitude not to. It is a kicking against the breasts of mercy. God sent His Son to redeem us, and His Spirit to comfort us. We sin against the blood of Christ, the grace of the Spirit and shall we not mourn?

4. We must mourn for sin as it is a privation; it keeps good things from us; it hinders our communion with God.

5. Gospel-mourning is for particular sins. And David lays his fingers upon the sore and points to that very sin that troubled him (Psalm 51: 4). I have done this evil. He means his blood-guiltiness.
6. Gospel-mourning must be purifying. Our mourning must make us more holy. It is an excellent saying of Augustine, ‘He truly bewails the sins he has committed, who never commits the sins he has bewailed’.


8. Gospel-mourning in some cases is joined with restitution. It is as well a sin to violate the name as the chastity of another. If we have eclipsed the good name of others, we are bound to ask them for forgiveness. If we have wronged them in their estate by unjust, fraudulent dealing, we must make them some compensation. Thus Zacchaeus, ‘If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold’ (Luke 19:8), according to the law of Exodus 22:1.

9. Gospel-mourning must be a speedy mourning, so should a Christian say, I will mourn for sin now. ‘Blessed are ye that weep now’ (Luke 6:21).

Motives to holy mourning
1. Gospel-mourning is an evidence of grace. ‘I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and they shall mourn . . .’ (Zechariah 12:10).

2. Mourning for sin is a sign of the new birth. Mourning shows a ‘heart of flesh’ (Ezekiel 36:26). A stone will not melt. When the heart is in a melting frame, it is a sign the heart of stone is taken away.

3. Mourning makes the soul fruitful in grace.

The comforts belonging to mourners
1. Mourning goes before comfort as the lancing of a wound precedes the cure. Observe, gospel tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort. While the penitent pours out tears, God pours in joy. If you would be cheerful (says Chrysostom), be sad. ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy’ (Psalm 126:5). It was the end of Christ’s anointing and coming into the world, that he might comfort them that mourn (Isaiah 61:3). Well then may the apostle call it ‘a repentance not to be repented of’ (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2. Holy mourning, says Basil, is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy grows.

The reason why the mourner shall be comforted is:
1. Because mourning is made on purpose for this end. Mourning is not prescribed for itself but that it may lead on to something else, that it may lay a train for comfort. Therefore we sow in tears that we may reap in joy. Holy mourning is a spiritual medicine. Now a medicine is not prescribed for itself, but for the sake of health. So gospel-mourning is appointed for this very end, to bring forth joy.

2. The spiritual mourner is the fittest person for comfort. When the heart is broken for sin, now it is fittest for joy. God pours the golden oil of comfort into broken vessels. The mourner’s heart is emptied of pride and God fills the empty with his blessing. The mourner’s tears have helped to purge out corruption.

How does the Spirit comfort? Either mediately or immediately.
1. Mediately, by helping us to apply the promises to ourselves and draw water out of those ‘wells of salvation’. We lie as dead children at the breast, till the Spirit helps us to suck
the breast of a promise; and when the Spirit has taught faith this art, now comfort flows in. O how sweet is the breast-milk of a promise!

2. The Spirit comforts immediately. The Spirit by a more direct act presents God to the soul as reconciled. It ‘sheds his love abroad in the heart’, from whence flows infinite joy (Romans 5:5). The Spirit secretly whispers pardon for sin, and the sight of a pardon dilates the heart with joy. ‘Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee’ (Matthew 9:2).

3. The comforts which God gives his mourners are holy comforts. They are called ‘the comfort of the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 9:31). Everything propagates in its own kind. The Holy Ghost can no more produce impure joys in the soul than the sun can produce darkness.

He who has the comforts of the Spirit looks upon himself as a person engaged to do God more service. Has the Lord looked upon me with a smiling face? I can never pray enough. I can never love God enough.

4. The comforts of the Spirit raise in the heart an holy antipathy against sin. He who has a principle of life in him opposes everything that would destroy life.

5. Divine comforts give the soul more acquaintance with God. ‘Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus.’ (1 John 1:3).

6. The comforts reserved for the mourners are “filling comforts”: ‘The God of hope fill you with all joy . . .’ (Romans 15:13). ‘Ask . . . that your joy may be full’ (John 16:24).

When God pours in the joys of heaven, they fill the heart and make it run over.

But the question may be asked, May not God’s mourners lack these comforts? Spiritual mourners have in general experience these comforts, yet they may sometimes lack them. God is a free agent. He will have the timing of our comforts. He has a self-freedom to do what He will. The Holy One of Israel will not be limited. He reserves His prerogative to give or suspend comfort as He will; and if we are awhile without comfort, we must not quarrel with His dispensations, for as the mariner is not to wrangle with providence because the wind blows out of the east when he desires it to blow out of the west; nor is the husband-man to murmur when God stops the bottles of heaven in time of drought; so neither is any man to dispute or quarrel with God, when He stops the sweet influence of comfort, but he ought rather to acquiesce in His sacred will.

But though the Lord might by virtue of His sovereignty withhold comfort from the mourner, yet there may be many pregnant causes assigned why mourners lack comfort in regard of God and also in regard of themselves.

1. In regard of God: He sees it fit to withhold comfort that He may raise the value of grace. We are apt to esteem comfort above grace, therefore God locks up our comforts for a time, that He may enhance the price of grace. God would have His people serve Him for himself and not for comfort only.

The times we are cast into, being for the present sad and cloudy, it will not be amiss for the reviving the hearts of God’s people, to speak a little of these comforts which God reserves in heaven for His mourners. ‘They shall be comforted’. The greatness of these celestial comforts is most fitly in Scripture expressed by the joy of a feast. Mourning shall be turned into feasting, and it shall be a marriage-feast, which is usually kept with the greatest solemnity. ‘Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb’ (Revelation 19:9). O feed with delight upon the thoughts of this marriage-supper! After
your funeral begins your festival. Long for suppertime. “The delay is long which separates us from our honey-sweet joys”. Christ has paid for this supper upon the cross, and there is no fear of a “reckoning” to be brought in. ‘Wherefore comfort one another with these words’.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5

Lloyd Jones:

1. The world thinks in terms of strength and power, of ability, self-assurance and aggressiveness. But here comes this astounding statement, ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth’ and they alone. Once more, then, we are reminded at the very beginning that the Christian is altogether different from the world. It is a difference in quality, an essential difference. He is a new man, a new creation; he belongs to an entirely different kingdom.

How do I react to other people? That is the matter which is dealt with at this point. Who is this meek person? What is he like? Well, there are many illustrations one can give.

1. Take certain of the Old Testament characters, for instance. Take Abraham, and as you look at him you see a great and wonderful portrait of meekness. It is the great characteristic of his life. You remember his behavior with respect to Lot, and how he allows the younger man to assert himself and take the first choice and does it without a murmur and without a complaint – that is meekness.

2. You see it again in Moses, who is actually described as the most meek man on the face of the earth. Examine his character and you see the same thing, this lowly conception of himself, this readiness not to assert himself but rather to humble and to abase himself.

3. The same is true of David, especially in his relations with Saul.

4. Again, take Jeremiah and the unpopular message that was given to him. See how he suffered and allowed the unkind things to be said about him behind his back, and how he went on delivering his message. It is a wonderful example of meekness.

5. Look at the portrait of Stephen and you will see this text illustrated. Look at it in the case of Paul, that mighty man of God. Consider what he suffered at the hands of these different churches and at the hands of his own countrymen and various other people. As you read his letters you will see this quality of meekness coming out, and especially as he writes to the members of the church at Corinth who had been saying such unkind and disparaging things about him. It is again a wonderful example of meekness.

6. But of course we must come to the supreme example, and stand and look at our Lord Himself. ‘Come unto me,’ He said, ‘all ye that labour . . . and I will give you rest. . . I am meek and lowly in heart.’ You see it in the whole of His life. You see it in His reaction to other people, you see it especially in the way He suffered persecution and scorn, sarcasm and derision. Rightly was it said of Him, ‘A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.’ His attitude towards His enemies, but perhaps still more His utter submission to His Father, show His meekness. Look at the portrait of Him which we find in Philippians 2 where Paul tells us that He did not regard His equality with God as a prerogative at which to clutch or something to hold on to at all costs. No, He decided to live as a Man, and He did. He humbled Himself, became as a servant and even went to
the death on the cross. That is meekness; that is lowliness; that is true humility; that is the quality which He Himself is teaching at this point.

What, then, is meekness? I think we can sum it up in this way. Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others. It is therefore two things. It is my attitude towards myself; and it is an expression of that in my relationship to others.

1. A person who is of the type that I have been describing must of necessity be mild. Think again of the examples; think again of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mild, gentle, lowly – those are the terms. Quiet, of a quiet spirit. In a sense the most approachable Person this world has ever seen was the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. But it also means that there will be a complete absence of the spirit of retaliation. It also means, therefore, that we shall be patient and long-suffering, especially when we suffer unjustly. You remember how Peter puts that in the second chapter of his first Epistle, that we should follow Jesus’ steps: ‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously’. It means patience and long-suffering even when we are suffering unjustly. There is no credit, Peter argues in that chapter, if, when we are buffeted for our faults, we take it patiently; but if we do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, then that is the thing that is praiseworthy in the sight of God. That is meekness.

3. Finally, I would put it like this. We are to leave everything – ourselves, our rights, our cause, our whole future in the hands of God, and especially so if we feel we are suffering unjustly. We learn to say with the apostle Paul that our policy must be this, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord’. We need not repay, we just deliver ourselves into the hands of God. The Lord will revenge; He will repay. We have nothing to do. We leave ourselves and our cause, and our rights and everything with God, with a quietness in spirit and in mind and heart.

Now notice what happens to the man who is like this. ‘Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.’ What does that mean?

1. We can summarize it very briefly. The meek already inherit the earth in this life, in this way. A man who is truly meek is a man who is always satisfied, he is a man who is already content. The apostle Paul says, ‘as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.’

2. But obviously it has a future reference also. ‘Do ye not know’, says Paul again to these Corinthians, in I Corinthians 6, ‘do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?’ You are going to judge the world, you are going to judge angels. You will then have inherited the earth. In Romans 8, he puts it this way. ‘We are children, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.’ That is it; we are going to inherit the earth. ‘If we suffer with him’, he says to Timothy, ‘we shall also reign with him.’ In other words, “Do not be worried about your suffering, Timothy. You be meek and suffer and you shall reign with Him. You are going to inherit the earth with Him.”

But I think it is all to be found in those words of our Lord in Luke 14:11: ‘Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’
There, then, is what is meant by being meek. This is obviously something that is quite impossible to the natural man. We shall never make ourselves meek. The poor people who went off and made themselves monks were trying to make themselves meek. We shall never do it. It cannot be done. Nothing but the Holy Spirit can humble us, nothing but the Holy Spirit can make us poor in spirit and make us mourn because of our sinfulness and produce in us this true, right view of self and give us this very mind of Christ Himself. It is a character that is produced in us by the Spirit. It is the direct fruit of the Spirit.

Pink:

‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:5).
A study of its usage in Scripture reveals, first, that meekness is linked with and cannot be separated from lowliness: ‘Learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart’ (Matthew 11:29); ‘Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness’ (Eph. 4:1, 2). Second, it is associated with and cannot be divorced from gentleness: ‘I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ’ (2 Cor. 10:1); ‘To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men’ (Titus 3:2). Third, ‘receive with meekness the engrafted word’ is opposed to ‘the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God’ (Jam. 1:20, 21). Fourth, the Divine promise is ‘the meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way’ (Ps. 25:9), intimating that this grace consists of a pliant heart and will.

Additional help in determining for us the meaning and scope of the word “meek” is to be obtained from duly noting our present verse in the light of the two preceding ones. It is to be kept steadily in mind that in those Beatitudes our Lord is describing the orderly development of God’s work of grace as it is experientially realized in the soul. First, there is a poverty of spirit: a sense of our insufficiency and nothingness, a realization of our unworthiness and unprofitableness. Next, there is a mourning over sorrowing for the awfulness of our sins against God. And now we have meekness as a by-product of a broken will and a receptive heart before God. Meekness is not only the antithesis of pride, but of stubbornness, fierceness, vengefulness.

Thomas Scott rightly points out that “There is a natural meekness of spirit, springing from love of ease, defect in sensibility and firmness, and the predominancy of other passions, which should be carefully distinguished from evangelical meekness.”

1. Meekness is the opposite of self-will toward God, and of ill-will toward men. “The meek are those who quietly submit themselves before God, to His Word, to His rod, who follow His directions and comply with His designs, and are gentle toward men” (Matthew Henry). As pointed out above, this is not constitutional, but gracious—a precious fruit of the Spirit’s working.

2. Meekness consists in the spirit being made pliant, tractable, submissive, teachable. Speaking prophetically through Isaiah the Savior said, ‘The Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek’ (Isa. 16:1).

A word or two on the fruits of meekness. First, Godwards. Where this grace is in the ascendant, the enmity of the carnal mind is subdued, and its possessor bears God’s chastenings with quietness and patience.
1. Supremely it was exemplified by Christ, who declared, ‘The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?’ (John 18:11). He was ‘led [not dragged] as a lamb to the slaughter’: when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He was buffeted, He threatened not. He was the very King of meekness.

Second, manwards. Inasmuch as meekness is that spirit which has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering, and brought into sweet resignation to the will of God, it causes the believer to bear patiently those insults and injuries which he receives at the hands of his fellows, and makes him ready to accept instruction or admonition from the least of the saints, moving him to think more highly of others than of himself.

1. Meekness enables the Christian to endure provocations without being inflamed by them: he remains cool when others get heated. ‘Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted’ (Gal. 6:1). This means, not with a lordly and domineering attitude, not with a harsh and censorious temper, not with a love of finding fault and desire for inflicting the discipline of the church, but with gentleness, humility and patience.

2. But meekness must not be confounded with weakness. True meekness is ever manifested by yieldedness to God’s will, yet it will not yield a principle of righteousness or compromise with evil.

3. God-given meekness can also stand up for God-given rights: when God’s glory is impeached, we must have a zeal which is as hot as fire. Moses was ‘very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth’ (Num. 12:3), yet when he saw the Israelites dancing before the golden calf, in zeal for Jehovah’s honor, he broke the two tables of stone, and put to the sword those who had transgressed. Note how firmly and boldly the apostles stood their ground in Acts 16:35-37. Above all, remember how Christ Himself, in concern for His Father’s glory, made a whip of cords and drove the desecrators out of the temple. Meekness restrains from private revenge, but it in nowise conflicts with the requirements of fidelity to God, His cause, and His people.

‘For they shall inherit the earth’ or ‘land,’ for both the Hebrew and Greek words possess this double meaning. This promise is taken from Psalm 37:11, and may be understood in the following way.

1. First, spiritually, as the second half of that verse intimates: “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” The spirit of meekness is what enables its possessor to get so much enjoyment out of his earthly portion, be it small or large. Contentment of mind is one of the fruits of meekness.

2. Second, literally. The meek inherit the earth in regard of right, being the members of Christ, who is Lord of all. Hence, writing to the saints, Paul said, ‘For all things are yours; whether... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours’ (1 Cor. 3:21, 22). The saints shall reign with Christ.

Watson:

We are at the third step leading in the way to blessedness, Christian meekness. ‘Blessed are the meek’. See how the Spirit of God adorns the hidden man of the heart, with multiplicity of graces! The workmanship of the Holy Ghost is not only curious, but various. It makes the heart meek,
pure, peaceable etc. The graces therefore are compared to needlework, which is different and various in its flowers and colors (Psalm 45: 14). In the words there is a duty, and that duty like the dove brings an olive leaf in the mouth of it, ‘they shall inherit the earth’.

The proposition is that meek persons are blessed persons. For the right understanding of this, we must know there is a twofold meekness. Meekness towards God, meekness towards man.

1. Meekness towards God, which implies two things: submission to His will; pliability to His Word.
   a. Submission to God’s will: when we carry ourselves calmly, without swelling or murmuring, under the dispensations of providence. The meek-spirited Christian saith thus: Let God do what He will with me, let Him carouse what condition He please, I will submit. God sees what is best for me, whether a fertile soil or a barren. Let Him chequer His work as He please, it suffices that God has done it. It was an unmeek spirit in the prophet to struggle with God: ‘I do well to be angry to the death’ (Jonah 4: 9).
   b. Pliability to God’s Word: when we are willing to let the Word bear sway in our souls and become pliable to all its precepts. He is spiritually meek who conforms himself to the mind of God, and does not quarrel with the instructions of the Word, but with the corruptions of his heart. Cornelius’ speech to Peter savored of a meek spirit: ‘Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God’ (Acts 10: 33). How happy is it when the Word which comes with majesty is received with meekness! (James 1: 21).

2. Meekness towards man. Basil the Great calls this the indelible character of a gracious soul. ‘Blessed are the meek’. To illustrate this, I shall show what this meekness is. Meekness is a grace whereby we are enabled by the Spirit of God to moderate our passion. It is a grace. The philosopher calls it a virtue, but the apostle calls it a grace, and therefore reckons it among the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ (Galatians 5: 23).
   a. It is of a divine extract and original. By it we are enabled to moderate our passion. By nature the heart is like a troubled sea, casting forth the foam of anger and wrath. Now meekness calms the passions. It sits as moderator in the soul, quieting and giving check to its distempered motions. Meekness of spirit not only fits us for communion with God, but for civil converse with men; and thus among all the graces it holds first place. Meekness has a divine beauty and sweetness in it. It brings credit to religion; it wins upon all.
   b. This meekness consists in three things: the bearing of injuries, the forgiving of injuries, the recompensing of good for evil.

   First, meekness consists in the bearing of injuries. I may say of this grace, ‘it is not easily provoked’. A meek spirit, like wet tinder, will not easily take fire. Meekness is “the bridle of anger”.

There are four things opposite to meekness.

1. Meekness is opposed to hastiness of spirit. Anger may be in a wise man, but it rests in a fool. The angry man is like flax or gunpowder. No sooner do you touch him but he is all on fire. ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil’
(Ephesians 4: 26, 27). Oh, says one, he has wronged me and I will never give place to him; but better give place to him than to the devil.
a. Not but that we may in some cases be angry. There is an holy anger. That anger is without sin which is against sin. Meekness and zeal may stand together. Christ was meek (Matt. 1 1: 29), yet zealous (John 2: 14, 15). The zeal of God’s house ate him up.
2. Meekness is opposed to malice and hate (1 John 3:15).
3. Meekness is opposed to revenge. Malice or hate is the scum of anger, and revenge is malice boiling over. The Scripture forbids revenge: ‘Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves’ (Romans 12:19). This is to take God’s office out of his hand, who is called ‘the God of recompenses’ (Jeremiah 51:56) and the ‘God of vengeance’ (Psalm 94:1).
b. Without question a man may take up the sword for self-preservation, else he comes under the breach of the sixth commandment. He is guilty of self-murder. In taking up the sword he does not so much seek another’s death, as the safeguard of his own life. His intention is not to do hurt, but to prevent it. Self-defence is consistent with Christian meekness.
4. Meekness is opposed to evil-speaking. ‘Let all evil-speaking be put away’ (Ephesians 4: 31). ‘Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire’ (Matthew 5: 22). Under that word ‘fool’, all vilifying terms are by our Savior forbidden.
a. Some may say, but did not the apostle Paul call the Galatians fools? (Galatians 3: 1). I answer, Paul had an infallible spirit, which we do not have. Besides, when Paul uttered those words, it was not by way of reproach, but reproof. It was not to defame the Galatians but to reclaim them; not to vilify them but to humble them. Paul was grieved to see them so soon fall into a relapse. But though Paul, guided by the Spirit of God, did give this epithet to the Galatians, it is no warrant for us when any have wronged us to use disgraceful terms.

A Christian ought to prudentially clear himself from slanders. Though a Christian’s retorts must not be vulnerating, they may be vindicating. Though he may not scandalize another, yet he may apologize for himself. There must be Christian prudence, as well as Christian meekness. It is not mildness but weakness to part with our integrity (Job 27: 6). To be silent when we are slanderously traduced, is to make ourselves appear guilty.

The second branch of meekness is in forgiving of injuries. ‘And when ye stand praying, forgive’ (Mark 11:25); as if Christ had said, It is to little purpose to pray, unless you forgive. A meek spirit is a forgiving spirit. This is an Herculean work. Nothing more crosses the stream of corrupt nature. Men forget kindnesses, but remember injuries. Forgiveness must be:
1. Really. God does not make a show of forgiveness and keep our sins by him. He ‘blots out’ our debts (Isaiah 43: 25). God passes an act of oblivion (Jeremiah 31: 34). He forgives and forgets. So the meek spirit not only makes a show of forgiving his neighbor, but he does it from the heart (Matthew 18: 27).
2. Fully. God forgives all our sins. ‘Who forgiveth all thy iniquities’ (Psalm 103: 3). Thus a meek-spirited Christian forgives all injuries. False hearts pass by some offences, but
retain others. This is but half forgiving. Is this meekness? Would you have God deal so with you? Would you have him forgive your trespasses, as you forgive others?

3. God forgives often. We run every day afresh upon the score, but God often forgives. Therefore he is said to ‘multiply pardon’ (Isaiah 55: 7). So a meek spirit reiterates and sends one pardon after another.
   a. Peter asks the question, ‘Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?’ (Matthew 18:21) Christ answers him, ‘I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven’ (verse 22).

_The third branch of meekness is in recompensing good for evil._ This is an higher degree than the other. ‘Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you’ (Matthew 5: 44). ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him’ (Romans 12: 20). ‘Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing’ (1 Peter 3: 9). This threefold cord of Scripture should not easily be broken. To render evil for evil is brutish: to render evil for good is devilish; to render good for evil is Christian. He is full of love to his enemies.
   1. Grace allays the passion and melts the heart into compassion.
   2. Meekness conquers the opposers of truth. Meekness melts the heart. ‘Soft words’ are softening.
   3. Meekness is necessary in hearing the Word. ‘Receive with meekness the engrafted Word’ (James 1: 21). He who comes to the Word with either passion or prejudice gets no good, but hurt.
   4. Meekness is needful in reproof. ‘If a man be overtaken with a fault, restore such an one with the spirit of meekness’ (Galatians 6: 1).

I shall lay down several motives or arguments to meeken the spirits of men.
   1. Let me propound examples of meekness
      a. The example of Jesus Christ. ‘Thy king cometh unto thee meek’ (Matthew 21:5).
         Christ was the sampler and pattern of meekness. ‘When he was reviled, he reviled not again’ (1 Peter 2: 23). His enemies’ words were more bitter than the gall they gave him, but Christ’s words were smoother than oil. He prayed and wept for his enemies. He calls us to learn of him: ‘Learn of me, for I am meek’ (Matthew 11:29). Christ does not bid us (says Augustine) learn of him to work miracles, to open the eyes of the blind, to raise the dead, but he would have us learn of him to be meek.
      b. Let us set before our eyes the examples of some of the saints who have shined in this grace. Moses was a man of unparalleled meekness. ‘Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth’ (Numbers 12: 3). How many injuries did he put up? When the people of Israel murmured against him, instead of falling into a rage, he falls to prayer for them (Exodus 15: 24, 25). The text says, they murmured at the waters of Marah. Sure the waters were not so bitter as the spirits of the people, but they could not provoke him to passion, but to petition.
   2. Meekness is a great ornament to a Christian. ‘The ornament of a meek spirit’ (1 Peter 3: 4). How amiable is a saint in God’s eye when adorned with this jewel! What the psalmist says of praise (Psalm 33: 1), the same may I say of meekness. It is ‘comely for the righteous’. No garment is more becoming to a Christian than meekness. Therefore we are bid to put on this garment. ‘Put on therefore as the elect of God, … meekness, …’ (Colossians 3:12)
3. This is the way to be like God. God is meek towards them that provoke him. How many black mouths are opened daily against the Majesty of heaven? How do men tear His Name! vex His Spirit! They walk up and down the earth as so many devils covered with flesh, yet the Lord is meek, ‘not willing that any should perish’ (2 Peter 3:9). How easily could God crush sinners, and kick them into hell! But He moderates His anger. Though He be full of majesty, yet full of meekness. In Him is mixed princely greatness and fatherly mildness. As He has His scepter of royalty, so His throne of grace. Oh how should this make us fall in love with meekness! Hereby we bear a kind of likeness to God. Where meekness is wanting, we are not like men. Where it is present, we are like God.

4. Meekness argues a noble and excellent spirit. A meek man is a valorous man. He gets a victory over himself.
   a. ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city’ (Proverbs 16:32).

5. Meekness is the best way to conquer and melt the heart of an enemy.
   a. This ‘heaping of coals’ melts and thaws the heart of others. It is the greatest victory to overcome an enemy without striking a blow. Mildness prevails more than fierceness. Passion makes an enemy of a friend. Meekness makes a friend of an enemy. The meek Christian shall have letters testimonial even from his adversary.

What shall I do to be possessed of this excellent grace of meekness?
1. Often look upon the meekness of Christ. The scholar that would write well has his eye often upon the copy.
2. Pray earnestly that God will meeken your spirit. God is called ‘the God of all grace’ (1 Peter 5: 10). He has all the graces in His gift. Sue to Him for this grace of meekness. If one were patron of all the livings in the land, men would sue to him for a living. God is patron of all the graces. Let us sue to Him. Mercy comes in at the door of prayer. ‘I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them’ (Ezekiel 36: 26, 37). Meekness is the commodity we want. Let us send prayer as our factor over to heaven to procure it for us; and pray in faith. When faith sets prayer on work, prayer sets God on work. All divine blessings come streaming to us through this golden channel of prayer.

References