

# They Are Attended With the Lamblike, Dovelike Spirit and Temper of Jesus Christ

by Jonathan Edwards

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*The Christian spirit is characterized by meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy, and is attended by a lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:5, Luke 9:55, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Galatians 5:22, Colossians 3:12, James 3:14

**Topics:** "Christian Character", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the true nature of gracious affections, which differ from false affections by promoting a spirit of love, meekness, forgiveness, and mercy, resembling the temper of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures abundantly support this Christian spirit as the distinguishing disposition of genuine Christians, evident in qualities like meekness, mercy, and peacemaking. Christians are called to reflect Christ's character, being renewed in His image and bearing the same kind of fruit through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

VIII. Truly gracious affections differ from those affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with the lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ; or in other words, they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appears in Christ. The evidence of this in the Scripture is very abundant. If we judge of the Nature of Christianity, and the proper spirit of the gospel, by the word of God, this spirit is what may, by way of eminency, be called the Christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true, and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of Christians as Christians.

When some of the disciples of Christ said something, through inconsideration and infirmity, that was not agreeable to such a spirit, Christ told them, that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of, Luke 9:55, implying that this spirit that I am speaking of, is the proper spirit of his religion and kingdom. All that are truly godly, and real disciples of Christ, have this spirit in them; and not only so, but they are of this spirit; it is the spirit by which they are so possessed and governed, that it is their true and proper character.

This is evident by what the wise man says, Prov. 17:27 (having respect plainly to such a spirit as this): "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." And by the particular description Christ gives of the qualities and temper of such as are truly blessed, that shall obtain mercy, and are God's children and

heirs: Matt. 5:5, 7, 9, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

And that this spirit is the special character of the elect of God, is manifested by Col. 3:12, 13: "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." And the apostle, speaking of that temper and disposition, which he speaks of as the most excellent and essential thing in Christianity, and that without which none are true Christians, and the most glorious profession and gifts are nothing (calling this spirit by the name of charity), he describes it thus, 1 Cor. 13:4, 5: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

And the same apostle, Gal. 5, designedly declaring the distinguishing marks and fruits of true Christian grace, chiefly insists on the things that appertain to such a temper and spirit as I am speaking of, ver. 22, 23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And so does the Apostle James, in describing true grace, or that wisdom that is from above, with that declared design, that others who are of a contrary spirit may not deceive themselves, and lie against the truth, in professing to be Christians, when they are not, James 3:14-17: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not; and lie not against the truth."

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Every thing that appertains to holiness of heart, does indeed belong to the nature of true Christianity; and the character of Christians; but a spirit of holiness as appearing in some particular graces, may more especially be called the Christian spirit or temper.

There are some amiable qualities and virtues, that do more especially agree with the nature of the gospel constitution, and Christian profession; because there is a special agreeableness in them, with those divine attributes which God has more remarkably manifested and glorified in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, that is the grand subject of the Christian revelation; and also a special agreeableness with those virtues that were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ towards us in that affair, and the blessed example he hath therein set us; and likewise because they are peculiarly agreeable to the special drift and design of the work of redemption, and the benefits we thereby receive, and the relation that it brings us into, to God and one another. And these virtues are such as humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy. These things therefore especially belong to the character of Christians, as such.

These things are spoken of as what are especially the character of Jesus Christ himself, the great head of the Christian church. They are so spoken of in the prophecies of the Old Testament; as in that cited Matt. 21:5: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." So Christ himself speaks of them, Matt. 11:29: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The same appears by the name by which Christ is so often called in Scripture, viz., the Lamb.

And as these things are especially the character of Christ, so they are also especially the character of Christians. Christians are Christlike; none deserve the name of Christians, that are not so in their prevailing character. "The new man is renewed, after the image of him that created him," Col. 3:10. All true

Christians behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, by his Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:18. The elect are all predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, that he might be the first born among many brethren, Rom. 8:29.

As we have borne the image of the first man, that is earthly, so we must also bear the image of the heavenly; for as is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly, 1 Cor. 15:47, 48, 49.--Christ is full of grace; and Christians all receive of his fullness, and grace for grace; i.e., there is grace in Christians answering to grace in Christ, such an answerableness as there is between the wax and the seal; there is character for character: such kind of graces, such a spirit and temper, the same things that belong to Christ's character, belong to theirs.

That disposition, wherein Christ's character does in a special manner consist, therein does his image in a special manner consist. Christians that shine by reflecting the light of the Sun of righteousness, do shine with the same sort of brightness, the same mild, sweet, and pleasant beams. These lamps of the spiritual temple, that are enkindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same sort of flame. The branch is of the same nature with the stock and root, has the same sap, and bears the same sort of fruit.

The members have the same kind of life with the head. It would be strange if Christians should not be of the same temper and spirit that Christ is of; when they are his flesh and his bone, yea, are one spirit, 1 Cor. 6:17; and live so, that it is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them. A Christian spirit is Christ's mark that he sets upon the souls of his people, his seal in their foreheads, bearing his image and superscription.--Christians are the followers of Christ; and they are so, as they are obedient to that call of Christ, Matt. 11:28, 29, "Come unto me--and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly of heart."

They follow him as the Lamb: Rev. 14:4, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." True Christians are as it were clothed with the meek, quiet, and loving temper of Christ; for as many as are in Christ, have put on Christ. And in this respect the church is clothed with the sun, not only by being clothed with his imputed righteousness, but also by being adorned with his graces, Rom. 13:14. Christ, the great Shepherd, is himself a Lamb, and believers are also lambs; all the flock are lambs: John 21:15, "Feed my lambs."

Luke 10:3, "I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves." The redemption of the church by Christ from the power of the devil, was typified of old, by David's delivering the lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear.

That such manner of virtue as has been spoken of, is the very nature of the Christian spirit, or the spirit that worketh in Christ, and in his members, and in the distinguishing nature of it, is evident by this, that the dove is the very symbol or emblem, chosen of God, to represent it. Those things are fittest emblems of other things, which do best represent that which is most distinguishing in their nature. The Spirit that descended on Christ, when he was anointed of the Father, descended on him like a dove. The dove is a noted emblem of meekness, harmlessness, peace and love. But the same Spirit that descended on the head of the church, descends to the members. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts," Gal. 4:6. And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. 8:9. There is but one Spirit to the whole mystical body, head and members, 1 Cor. 6:17, Eph. 4:4. Christ breathes his own Spirit on his disciples, John 20:22. As Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost, descending on him like a dove, so Christians also "have an anointing from the Holy One," 1 John 2:20, 27. And they are anointed with the same oil; it is the same "precious ointment on the head, that goes down to the skirts of the garments." And

on both, it is a spirit of peace and love. Psalm 133:1, 2, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments." The oil on Aaron's garments had the same sweet and inimitable odor with that on his head; the smell of the same sweet spices, Christian affections, and a Christian behavior, is but the flowing out of the savor of Christ's sweet ointments. Because the church has a dovelike temper and disposition, therefore it is said of her that she has doves' eyes, Cant. 1:15: "Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves' eyes." And chap. 4:1, "Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks." The same that is said of Christ, chap. 6:12: "His eyes are as the eyes of doves." And the church is frequently compared to a dove in Scripture: Cant. 2:14, "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." Chap. 5:2, "Open to me, my love, my dove." And chap. 6:9, "My dove, my undefiled is but one." Psal. 68:13, "Ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." And 74:19, "O deliver not the soul of the turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked." The dove that Noah sent out of the ark, that could find no rest for the sole of her foot, until she returned, was a type of a true saint.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the meek and the godly, are used as synonymous terms in Scripture: so Psalm 37:10, 11, the wicked and the meek are set in opposition one to another, as wicked and godly: "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; but the meek shall inherit the earth." So Psal. 147:6, "The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground."

It is doubtless very much on this account, that Christ represents all his disciples, all the heirs of heaven, as little children: Matt. 19:14, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 10:42, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matt. 18:6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, &c." Ver. 10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Ver. 14, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." John 13:33, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." Little children are innocent and harmless; they do not do a great deal of mischief in the world; men need not be afraid of them; they are no dangerous sort of persons; their anger does not last long, they do not lay up injuries in high resentment, entertaining deep and rooted malice. So Christians, in malice, are children, 1 Cor. 14:20. Little children are not guileful and deceitful, but plain and simple; they are not versed in the arts of fiction and deceit; and are strangers to artful disguises. They are yieldable and flexible, and not willful and obstinate; do not trust to their own understanding, but rely on the instructions of parents, and others of superior understanding. Here is therefore a fit and lively emblem of the followers of the Lamb. Persons being thus like little children, is not only a thing highly commendable, and what Christians approve and aim at, and which some extraordinary proficiency do attain to: but it is their universal character, and absolutely necessary in order to entering into the kingdom of heaven: Matt. 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mark 10:15, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

But here some may be ready to say, Is there no such thing as Christian fortitude, and boldness for Christ, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare, and coming out boldly against the enemies of Christ and his people?

To which I answer, There doubtless is such a thing. The whole Christian life is compared to a warfare, and fitly so. And the most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endued with the greatest degrees of Christian fortitude. And it is the duty of God's people to be steadfast and vigorous in their opposition to the

designs and ways of such as are endeavoring to overthrow the kingdom of Christ, and the interest of religion. But yet many persons seem to be quite mistaken concerning the nature of Christian fortitude. It is an exceeding diverse thing from a brutal fierceness, or the boldness of the beasts of prey. True Christian fortitude consists in strength of mind, through grace, exerted in two things; in ruling and suppressing the evil and unruly passions and affections of the mind; and in steadfastly and freely exerting, and following good affections and dispositions, without being hindered by sinful fear, or the opposition of enemies. But the passions that are restrained and kept under, in the exercise of this Christian strength and fortitude, are those very passions that are vigorously and violently exerted in a false boldness for Christ. And those affections that are vigorously exerted in true fortitude, are those Christian, holy affections that are directly contrary to them. Though Christian fortitude appears, in withstanding and counteracting the enemies that are without us; yet it much more appears, in resisting and suppressing the enemies that are within us; because they are our worst and strongest enemies, and have greatest advantage against us. The strength of the good soldier of Jesus Christ appears in nothing more, than in steadfastly maintaining the holy calm, meekness, sweetness, and benevolence of his mind, amidst all the storms, injuries, strange behavior, and surprising acts and events of this evil and unreasonable world. The Scripture seems to intimate that true fortitude consists chiefly in this: Prov. 16:32, "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jonathan-edwards/they-are-attended-with-the-lamblike-dovelike-spirit-and-temper-of-jesus-christ/>

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