



# Our Lord's Meekness and the Christian Life

Matthew 11:28-30

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Martin Luther in his 95 theses began with the definition of Christian life. He said that the Christian life is a life of repentance. This definition shows how repentance is important for Christians, but it also implies how our life is full of sin. We, Christians, confess Jesus as our Lord and Saviour by faith. We know that God predestined us, called us, justified and sanctified us, and eventually will glorify us. We also know that all things work together for good under God's providence.

However, living in a sinful world is troubling. We live in a fallen world. We still struggle with sin in our life. Every day we suffer because of sin: our own sin and our neighbor's sin. We are often distressed by the result of sin. We also are upset by our neighbor's sinful behavior. In a variety of ways, it is disturbing to live in a sinful world. Thus, even though we know that our hearts should be calm and quiet in Christ, we often lose heart. Our Christian life ironically often seems like a life of suffering. Then, the question is how should we live as Christians in a sinful world? Today our Lord answers, "... Learn from me for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

This sermon is a topical sermon on meekness and Christian life. There are two reasons why we should focus on meekness. Firstly, our Lord commands, "**Take** my yoke upon you, and **learn** from me." Our Lord **commands 'learn'** of me. What then should we learn from Him? One thing is that "I am meek and lowly in heart." Jesus with His heavenly authority instructs us that to learn His meekness (translated in ESV as gentleness) and His lowliness, which is humility. Secondly, Meekness and humility are important for Christians because they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As we know, meekness and humility are the

fruit of the Spirit according to Gal. 5 and Col. 3. A Christian is the one who is united to Christ by faith. We are **one** with Christ in this union. Christ said in the gospel of John, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit ...” (15:5). Therefore, if we truly abide in Christ by God’s grace, we will bear fruit. In this case, we will look at meekness and humility by considering our Lord’s example.

Meekness and humility are very similar concepts. Humility is the foundation of meekness. But the main difference between them is that humility is more about **understanding** of the relationship between God and man, but meekness is more about a humble **attitude** under suffering. In other words, the meek Christian calmly waits and sees the Lord under affliction. Therefore, we will cover two main points on meekness and Christian life. The first point is ‘Humility as the foundation of meekness’ and the second is ‘The meek Christian, who waits for the Lord and sees Him alone.’

## 1. Humility as the foundation of meekness

When we think about humility, we normally imagine the attitude of a modest man. We think more about emotion or attitude rather than understanding. However, humility in Christianity is not only about an attitude **but** an understanding. One scholar defines, humility as the understanding “of creatureliness, of absolute dependence, of possessing nothing and of receiving all things from God.” In other words, humility is **correctly understanding** who we are as a creature and who God is as the Creator. This is exactly what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3). The poor in spirit recognize that he is needy because he knows the need for God. He understands that he is a dependent being. Before the presence of God, the poor is **humble**.

This account of humility is described by the life of Jesus Christ. His life from the conception to death on the cross exemplifies **the humble Christian life**. Phil. 2:6-7 says, “... he [Christ] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied**

himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” But he emptied himself! How much he emptied himself? Heb. 2:14,17 says, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [which is Christ, who is God!] himself likewise partook of the **same** things ... he had to be made like his brothers **in every respect.**” The second person of the Trinity truly became man.

Who is the second person of the Trinity? Col. 1 says, “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, ... – all things were created through him and for him**” (15-16)! Christ Jesus **deeply and profoundly** humbled himself by taking the form of a servant and a man! By becoming man, **this very Son of God**, who created everything with God the Father, became **nothing**! Christ Jesus **became** what he was **not**! Why? Heb. 2 answers, “[v.9] ... so that by the grace of God he might **taste death for everyone** ... [v.17] so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make **propitiation for the sins of the people.**” To save us from death and to give us eternal life. Christ our Lord and our brother **emptied** himself.

Jesus’ death on the cross highlights how much our Lord humbled himself. The reason for that is, it is **impossible** for God to die. How could God die? He is the source of all being! He sustains the life of all creatures! He himself is the life! Death is the product of sin **but** God is eternal and **not** subject to death. Nevertheless, God the Son in his human nature **died** on the cross for the penalty of our sin! Through his death on the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ **perfectly and completely** emptied himself. **This glorious truth** is the humility, which our Lord taught and exemplified through His life.

Isn’t it wonderful how much our God humbled himself? Isn’t it amazing how God’s love is expressed in the humility of Jesus? Before the presence of our Lord, if you want to be humble like Him, let’s rejoice and praise God because God’s love has been poured into your hearts through the Holy Spirit as Rom. 5 says!

**Because** you see **the love** of Christ through His humble life, you **desire** to pursue him and to become like him. Isn’t it the very nature of love by which we desire to be one, not two, with our loved one? **Our**

**desire** to be humble, therefore, is **the love** toward God and a willful obedience to the law of God: What does Matt. 22:37 say? ‘You shall love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind’.

On the other hand, Christians; by nature we are **not** meek and humble. Our sinful nature contrasts with what Christ shows to us in his life and on the cross. Our sin, our willful disobedience to the law of God, is selfishness and arrogance. We know that we have to keep the law because we are free from sin in Christ, but we indulge the flesh for we still love to sin. We satisfy our sinful thirst by “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, division, envy, drunkenness, orgies, **and things like these**” (Gal. 5:19-21). **Christ** emptied himself through his life, but **we** fill ourselves through our sinful life. Christ made himself **nothing**, but **we** make ourselves something. When we break the law, there is no God, no Christ, even no neighbor, **but** there is **I, myself, my desire. Satisfying my sinful thirst. Sin** is **all** about myself. When we sin, we are truly higher than God in our eyes. In our sinful nature, we are arrogant.

So, brothers and sisters, let us remember the humility of our Lord at the cross! Standing before the cross, can you still love your sin and yourself more than Christ? He made Himself **nothing** and **died** for us! So, let us hate our sin; let us be humble before God! Let us repent of our arrogance and ask for humility before God. By God’s grace, let us **love** our God more than ourselves and more than our sin.

Let me give you one more application. In fact, our sinful lack of humility causes us suffering. If some of you are anguished by the guilt of a certain sin for a long time, I humbly urge you to examine your heart. Our sinful arrogance hinders not only the humble repentance of sin, but also it results **in** unbelief and distrust in God’s forgiveness. Where is the foundation of our forgiveness and salvation? Is it not Jesus Christ alone? Do you think it is **possible** to say that your certain sin is **unforgiven**, even though our God **perfectly** forgives your sin through Jesus Christ? If we are truly humble before God, then we not only repent of our sin, we also **rest** in God’s forgiveness. We **must have** an unshakable trust in God. We are perfectly clean as white as snow in Christ! **The author of**

our forgiveness, **the author** of our life is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ! Let's be humble and rejoice in our Savior's work!

## 2. The meek Christian is one who waits for the Lord and looks to Him alone.

The definition of meekness is a **humble attitude** of the soul toward God under suffering. Thus, humility is the foundation of meekness, and the humble one becomes **meek** under suffering. When suffering comes to the humble one, he would **not** be fretful or would not move **rashly** to solve the problem because he knows that the Lord is **the only hope** under suffering. He **waits** for God's work with **patience**.

Then, the humble one becomes **meek** under suffering. The meek one **patiently** waits for God. He does not become fretful, anxious, or anger under suffering, rather he **calmly waits** for the Lord by faith. By faith the meek one **looks to the invisible God through the visible afflictions**. His eyes are always fixed on God the Creator and the Savior. Natural man **always** focuses on his affliction or his pain, but the meek Christian **patiently** and **quietly looks** to the Lord in his suffering.

Our Lord showed an example of this meekness at the garden of Gethsemane. When our Lord said, "Father if you are willing, remove this cup from me, **Nevertheless**, not my will, but yours be done" (Lk. 22:42), he knew that he would be "betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world ..." (LC 49). But for Jesus, the **worst** suffering at the garden was not those things. For him, **the most dreadful affliction** was **to bear the full weight of our foul sin** and the **wrath** of God as the result of our sin.

Brothers and sisters, I believe that all of us may experience something of the filthiness of our sin. When we realize our sin after sinning against God, we become ashamed and horrified because we do not want to believe what we have done! It is the **same** picture when Adam and Eve were shamed and hid themselves from God's presence. They did not want to admit their sin, so they just ran away from God.

But what Jesus Christ experienced in the garden was **much worse** than our experience. He was **God**, who understood the consequences of sin **much** deeper than any creature, and he was **the innocent man**, who had no sin. If our finite and defiled mind is enough to see the ugliness of sin, then how much more our Lord suffered from bearing the sin? For us, it is almost impossible to understand His spiritual agony. **He** is the innocent God/man, but **we** are sinful men. Surely for the innocent one, bearing the filthiness of our sin was **much greater suffering** than what we experienced from time to time.

Under this suffering, what did our Lord do? Did he hide himself as Adam did? Did he try to find a plan to escape his suffering? Did he excuse his situation as Eve did? Did he grumble because of his heavenly responsibility? Not at all! **Our Lord Jesus meekly, but eagerly, beholds His Father and says, 'Not my will, but yours be done!'**

In our Christian life, we are often exhausted spiritually and emotionally. But when Paul encouraged Timothy, he said, "But as for you, ... Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, **[and] steadfastness, gentleness [meekness]**. Fight the good fight of the faith. I charge you **in the presence of God**, ... to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ**" (1 Tim. 6:11-14). When Paul exhorted Timothy, he made Timothy **look forward to** 'The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ', and he charged him to keep **in** 'the presence of God'. Paul made Timothy to lift up his eyes and to see God the Creator and the Saviour. The beauty of meekness is this. The beauty of Christian meekness is **looking to God under suffering!** We Christians **look to the invisible God!**

The meek one knows that God governs all things for our good and for His own glory. Thus, he patiently waits for God and quietly seeks the Lord. Furthermore, he conforms himself to the will of God as Christ did at the garden because he knows that there is **nothing** better than **to obey** the Lord our God. Even though his experience is so painful, and he is anguished and depressed by the hardship, the meek one will be **calm** in his heart and **quiet** in his spirit not because he has any ability or key to solve the problem, **but because** he believes in God. In faith he **casts** his **whole** being unto the Lord. Then, David in Psalm 37 confesses, "The

salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them ... **because they take refuge in him.**” Because we take refuge in God, God helps us and delivers us!

Of course, our flesh and heart could fail us again. We are such weak and sinful creatures. We may suffer again in **numerous** ways, and so our Christian life would not be easy **even** after this sermon. This reality may not change. However, let us engrave this truth on our heart: it is **impossible** for **Christians** to perish. We, Christians, can **never** perish. Paul in 2 Cor. said, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed (4:8-9). Why? Because **we are one with Christ, we are resurrected with Christ, we are alive with God in Christ!**” Paul says in Colossians, “**You were also raised** with him [Christ] through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead” (2:12). This very Word of God shows what a Christian is. What we as Christians means that, **we are** new creatures in Christ! We are spiritually resurrected with Christ! We **have new life** by being raised with Christ through faith!

Yes, we are living in a sinful world, this is true. It is awful to experience the sin in the world. It is worse to suffer for the sin. But brothers and sisters, **please** do not forget **who you are**. **You** are a new creation in Christ! **You** are Christians, who are born again by being raised with Christ!

**Who** can be truly humble before God **but** Christians? Who can be **meek** and **patient** under suffering but Christians? Only Christians! They **alone** could be humble, meek, and patient by the power of the Spirit! Then, Peter says in his first letter, “As obedient children, **do not** be conformed to the passions of your **former ignorance**, but as he who called you is holy, **you also be holy in all your conduct**” (1:14-15). Paul says in Colossians 3, “Put to **death** therefore what is earthly in you, ... **put off the old self** with its practice, **and put on the new self**, which is **being renewed** in knowledge after **the image** of its creator.” Christians! We are putting on the image of our God! We are learning from Jesus Christ! Again, Paul in the same letter says “Put on then as God’s chosen

ones, holy and beloved compassionate hearts, [let's listen to this word] kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (3:12). Christians! Let's put to death the old self and put on the new self! Let's **take** the yoke of Christ and **learn** from Him! Let's be meek and lowly like our Saviour!

Our flesh and heart may fail us, but our God is the strength of our heart and our portion forever (Ps. 73:26).