

HUMILITY

HUMILITY

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE INSTRUCTION OF WISDOM,
AND BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY.

Proverbs 15:33

ANDREW
MURRAY



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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Preface



Preface

There are three great motives that urge us to humility: it suits one as a creature, as a sinner, and as a believer. The first motive we see in the heavenly hosts, in unfallen man, and in Jesus as the Son of Man. The second motive appeals to us in our fallen state and points out the only way through which we can return to our right place as men and women. In the third motive, we have the mystery of grace, which teaches us that, as we lose ourselves in the overwhelming greatness of redeeming love, humility becomes to us the consummation of everlasting blessedness and adoration.

In our ordinary Christian teaching, the second aspect of man as sinner has been too exclusively put in the foreground. Some have even gone to the extreme of saying that we must keep sinning if we are indeed to remain humble. Others have thought that the strength of self-condemnation is the secret of humility. And the Christian life has suffered loss, because believers have not been distinctly guided to see that nothing is more natural and beautiful and blessed than to be nothing, so that God may be all. It has not been made clear that it is not sin that humbles us most, but grace. It is the soul, led through its sinfulness to be occupied with God

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in His wonderful glory as God, as Creator and Redeemer, that will truly take the lowest place before Him.

In these meditations I have, for more than one reason, almost exclusively directed attention to the humility that is suitable to us as men and women. It is not only because the connection between humility and sin is already abundantly set forth in all our Christian teaching, but because I believe that for the fullness of the Christian life, it is indispensable that prominence be given to the other aspect. If Jesus is indeed to be our example in His humility, we need to understand the principles in which it was rooted. We need to find the common ground on which we stand with Him, and in which our likeness to Him is to be attained. If we are indeed to be humble, not only before God but toward men—if humility is to be our joy—we must see that it is not just viewed as the mark of shame because of sin. It must also be understood apart from all sin as a covering with the very beauty and blessedness of heaven and of Jesus.

We will see that, just as Jesus found His glory in taking the form of a servant, so also He said to us, “*He that is greatest among you shall be your servant*” (Matt. 23:11). He simply taught us the blessed truth that there is nothing so divine and heavenly as being the servant and helper of all. The faithful servant who recognizes his position finds a real pleasure in supplying the wishes of the master or his guests. When we see that humility is something infinitely deeper than contrition, and accept it as our participation in the life of Jesus, we will begin to learn that it is our true nobility. We will begin to understand that being servants of all is the highest

fulfillment of our destiny, as men and women created in the image of God.

When I look back on my own religious experience, or on the church of Christ in the world, I stand amazed at the thought of how seldom humility is sought after as the distinguishing feature of the discipleship of Jesus. In preaching and living, in the daily activities of the home and social life, in the more special fellowship with Christians, in the direction and performance of work for Christ—there is much proof that humility is not considered the cardinal virtue. It is not considered the only root from which the graces can grow, and the one indispensable condition of true fellowship with Jesus. The accusation that those who claim to be seeking the higher holiness have not always done so with increased humility is a call to all earnest Christians to prove that meekness and lowliness of heart are the chief marks by which they follow the meek and humble Lamb of God.

—ANDREW MURRAY

chapter 1



Humility: The Glory of the Creature

chapter 1

Humility: The Glory of the Creature

The four and twenty elders...cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

—Revelation 4:10–11

When God created the universe, it was with the one objective of showing in it the glory of His love, His wisdom, and His power, and of making man the partaker of His perfection and blessedness. God wished to reveal Himself in and through created beings by communicating to them as much of His own goodness and glory as they were capable of receiving. But this did not mean that man was given something that he could possess in itself, or a certain life or goodness that he could control and use whenever he wanted. By no means.

As God is the ever living, ever present, ever acting One—who upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3), and in whom all things exist (Col. 1:17)—the

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relationship of man to God could only be one of unceasing, absolute, universal dependence. As truly as God by His power once created, so truly by that same power must God, every moment, maintain. Man needs only to look back to the origin of existence, and he will acknowledge that he owes everything to God. Man's chief care, his highest virtue, and his only happiness, now and throughout eternity, is to present himself as an empty vessel in which God can dwell and manifest His power and goodness.

The life God bestows is imparted not once and for

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all, but each moment continuously, by the unceasing operation of His mighty power. Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of man. It is the root of every virtue.

And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil. When the now fallen angels began to look upon themselves with self-satisfaction, they were led to disobedience and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. When the Serpent breathed the poison of his pride—the desire to be like God, “*knowing good and evil*” (Gen. 3:5)—into the hearts of our first parents, they, too, fell from their high estate into all the wretchedness in which man is now sunk. In all heaven and earth, pride and self-exaltation are the gate and the curse of hell. (See Note A on page 117.)

Hence, it follows that nothing can redeem us but the restoration of our lost humility, the original and only true

relationship of man to God. Jesus came to bring humility back to earth, to make us partakers of it, and by it to save us. In heaven, He humbled Himself to become man. The humility we see in Him, He possessed in heaven; it brought Him, and He brought it, from there. Here on earth "*he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death*" (Phil. 2:8). His humility gave His death its value, and so became our redemption. And now the salvation He imparts is nothing less than a communication of His own life and death, His own disposition and spirit. His own humility has become the ground and root of His relationship to God and His redeeming work. Jesus Christ took the place and fulfilled the destiny of man by His life of perfect humility. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.

And so the lives of the saved ones, of the saints, must bear this stamp of deliverance from sin and full restoration to their original state. Their whole relationship to both God and man must be marked by an all-pervading humility. Without this, there can be no true abiding in God's presence or experience of His favor and the power of His Spirit. Without this, there can be no abiding faith or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which the graces take root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a grace or virtue along with others; it is the root of all, because it alone assumes the right attitude before God and allows Him as God to do all.

God gave us a sense of reason. Because of this, the truer our insight into the real nature or the absolute

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need of a command, the fuller and more ready our obedience to it will be. The call to humility has been too little regarded in the church because its true nature and importance have been too little understood. It is not something that we bring to God or that He bestows. It is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all. Man must realize that this is the

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true nobility. He must consent to be—with his will, his mind, and his desires—the form and the vessel in which the life and glory of God are to work and manifest themselves. Then he will see that

humility is simply acknowledging the truth of his position as man and yielding to God His place.

In the lives of earnest Christians, of those who pursue and profess holiness, humility ought to be the chief mark of their uprightness. It is often said that it is not so. One reason may be that in the teaching and example of the church, humility has never had the place of supreme importance that rightfully belongs to it. This results from the neglect of this truth: that although sin is a powerful motive to humility, there is a motive of still wider and mightier influence—that which makes the angels, that which made Jesus, that which makes the holiest of saints in heaven so humble. That is, that the first and chief mark of the relationship of man with God, the secret of his blessedness, is the humility and nothingness that leaves God free to be all.

I am sure there are many Christians who will confess that their experience has been very much like my own in this—that we had known the Lord for a long time without realizing that meekness and lowliness of heart should be the distinguishing feature of the disciple, as it was of the Master. Such humility is not a thing that will come on its own. It must be made the object of special desire, prayer, faith, and practice. As we study the Word, we will see what very distinct and often repeated instructions Jesus gave His disciples on this point, and how slow they were in understanding Him.

From the beginning, let us admit that there is nothing so natural to man, nothing so insidious and hidden from our sight, nothing so difficult and dangerous, as pride. Let us feel that nothing but a very determined and persevering waiting on God and Christ will disclose how lacking we are in the grace of humility, and how weak we are to obtain what we seek. Let us study the character of Christ until our souls are filled with the love and admiration of His humility. And let us believe that, when we are broken down under a sense of our pride and realize our inability to cast it out, Jesus Christ Himself will give us this grace as a part of His wondrous life within us.