

The Posture That Pleases God

What a solemn thought, that our love for God will be measured by our everyday contact with men and the love it displays; and that our love for God will be found to be a delusion except as its truth is proved in standing the test of daily life with our fellow men!

It is even so with our humility. It is easy to think we humble ourselves before God, but humility toward men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real—that humility has taken up residence in us and become our very nature—that we actually, like Christ, have made ourselves of no reputation. When in the presence of God lowliness of heart has become not a posture in which we pray to Him but the very spirit of our life, it will manifest itself in all our bearing toward others.

The lesson is an important one: The only humility that is really ours is not that which we try to show before God in prayer, but that which we carry with us, and carry out, in our ordinary conduct. The insignificances of daily life are the importances and the tests of eternity because they prove what the spirit is that possesses us.

It is in our most unguarded moments that we really show and discern what we are. To know the humble man, to know how the humble man behaves, you must follow him in the common course of daily life.

Isn't this what Jesus taught? It was when the disciples disputed who should be considered greatest, when He related how the Pharisees loved the chief place at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, when He had given them the example of washing their feet, that He taught His lessons of humility. Humility before God is nothing if not proved in humility before men.

Paul's teachings confirm this truth. To the Romans he writes: "In honour preferring one another" (12:10, KJV); "Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to those that are lowly" (see v. 16); "Be not wise in your own conceits" (v. 16).

To the Corinthians: Love (and there is no love without humility as its root) "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed not her own, is not easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:4-5). To the Galatians: "Through love be servants one of another. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one other, envying one another" (see 5:13,26).

To the Ephesians, immediately after the three wonderful chapters on heavenly life: "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (4:1-2); "Giving thanks always, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (5:20-21).

To the Philippians: "Doing nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, each counting others better than himself. Have the mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and humbled Himself" (see 2:3,5-8).

And to the Colossians: "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, even as the Lord forgave you" (3:12-13).

It is in our relation to one another, in our treatment of one another, that true lowliness of mind and the heart of humility are to be seen. Our humility before God has no value except as it prepares us to reveal the humility of Jesus to our fellow men. Let us study humility in daily life in the light of these words.

The humble man seeks at all times to act up to the rule, "In honor preferring one another; Servants one of another; Each counting others better than himself; Subjecting yourselves one

to another.”

The question is often asked, “How can we count others better than ourselves when we see they are far below us in wisdom and in holiness, in natural gifts, or in grace received?” The question proves at once how little we understand what real lowliness of mind is.

True humility comes when, in the light of God, we have seen ourselves to be nothing, have consented to part with and cast away self, to let God be all. The soul that has done this and can say, “So have I lost myself in finding Thee,” no longer compares itself with others. It has given up forever every thought of self in God’s presence; it meets its fellow men as one who is nothing and seeks nothing for itself; it is a servant of God, and for His sake a servant of all.

A faithful servant may be wiser than the master and yet retain a true spirit and posture of the servant. The humble man looks upon every child of God, even the feeblest and unworthiest, and honors him and prefers him in honor as the son of a King. The spirit of Him who washed the disciples’ feet makes it a joy to us to be indeed the least, to be servants one of another.

The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised and himself forgotten, because in God’s presence he has learned to say with Paul, “I am nothing.” He has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself and sought not His own honor, as the spirit of his life.

Amid the temptations to impatience and touchiness, to hard thoughts and sharp words that come from the failings and sins of fellow Christians, the humble man carries the oft-repeated injunction in his heart, and shows it in his life: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as the Lord forgave you.” He has learned that in putting on the Lord Jesus

he has put on the heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and long-suffering.

Jesus has taken the place of self, and it is not an impossibility to forgive as Jesus forgave. His humility does not consist merely in thoughts or words of self-depreciation, but, as Paul puts it, in "a heart of humility," encompassed by compassion and kindness, meekness and long-suffering—the sweet and lowly gentleness recognized as the mark of the Lamb of God.

In striving after the higher experiences of a Christian life, the believer is often in danger of aiming at and rejoicing in what one might call the more human virtues, such as boldness, joy, contempt of the world, zeal, self-sacrifice (even the old Stoics taught and practiced these), while the deeper and gentler, the diviner and more heavenly graces (those that are more distinctly connected with the cross and the death of self), such as poverty of spirit, meekness, humility, and lowliness are scarcely thought of or valued. Therefore, let us put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and long-suffering; and let us prove our Christlikeness, not only in our zeal for saving the lost, but before all in our interaction with others, forbearing with and forgiving one another, even as the Lord forgave us.

Fellow Christians, let us study the Bible portrait of the humble man. And let us ask our fellow believers, and ask the world, whether they recognize in us the likeness to the original.

Let us be content with nothing less than taking each of these texts as the promise of what God will work in us, as the revelation in words of what the Spirit of Jesus will give as a birth within us. And let each failure and shortcoming simply urge us to turn humbly and meekly to the meek and lowly Lamb of God, in the assurance that where He is enthroned in the heart His humility and gentleness will be one of the streams

of living water that flow from within us.

Once again I repeat what I've said before. I feel deeply that we have very little conception of what the church suffers from the lack of divine humility—the nothingness that makes room for God to prove His power.

Why do men who have joyfully given themselves up for Christ find it so hard to give themselves up for their brothers? Is not the blame with the church? It has so little taught its sons and daughters that the humility of Christ is the first of the virtues, the best of all the graces and powers of the Spirit. It has so little proved that a Christlike humility is what it, even like Christ, places and preaches first—as what is in truth needed, and possible too!

But let us not be discouraged. Let the discovery of the lack of this grace stir us to larger expectation from God.

Let us look upon every brother who tries or vexes us as God's means of grace, God's instrument for our purification—an opportunity for our exercise of the humility Jesus our Life breathes within us. And let us have such faith in the All of God, and the nothing of self, that, as nothing in our own eyes, we may in God's power seek only to serve one another in love.

Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the author of numerous devotional works that have become classics, including Abide in Christ, Absolute Surrender and Waiting on God. Adapted from Humility by Andrew Murray, copyright 1997. Published by Christian Literature Crusade. Used by permission.