

THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST

BY ANNA W. PROSSER

"I am meek and lowly in heart."(Matthew 11:29)

IF Jesus Christ were not divine the words quoted above, like many similar ones, which He uttered in reference to Himself, would indicate the most revolting arrogance, rather than the humility, which He claimed. But coming from the guileless lips of the Holy Son of God, and their truthfulness having been abundantly proved every step of His earthly pilgrimage until He breathed out His precious life on Calvary's cross, it behooves us to carefully and prayerfully consider them. Andrew Murray has well said: "It is of inconceivable importance that we should have right thoughts of what Christ is, of what really constitutes Him the Christ, and especially of what may be counted His chief characteristic, the root and essence of all His character as our Redeemer. There can be but one Answer, it is His humility."

Beloved, have you already discovered this to be true, as you have studied the life and teachings of our Lord? Have you really felt that the most amazing, the most adorable, the most meltingly precious thing about the character of Jesus is His humility? And, if so, have you desired above all things to be like Him in this respect? See Him coming down from "the bosom of the Father," and appearing before the astonished world in the form of a little helpless babe, cradled not in soft, downy bed like the little ones in your home, but think of

it, a miserable manger! What could have been the amazement of His own sweet mother as she beheld the One declared by the angel Gabriel to be the Savior of the world, "the Son of God," lying thus in the lowliest birthplace which the earth could afford? Then growing up by her side in wisdom divine day by day, filling her ears with sayings which she herself could not understand, but wonderingly and reverently hid them away in her heart. (Luke 2:52) And yet this holy child Jesus, we read, was obedient and subject unto His parents in all things.

In Philemon 2:5-7 we read that this spotless undefiled One thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." In Hebrews 2:16 "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Have we yet discovered the depths of blackness and vileness and deceitfulness of the natural heart, probably not? Perhaps we never will, through all eternity, learn how "desperately wicked" it is. But the glimpses which we do obtain of it fill us with amazement as we contemplate the Son of God stooping to our low estate and taking on "the likeness of sinful flesh," that we might, through this unspeakable condescension get a view of the heart of God and by such wondrous love be

won back to our Father's arms. He took the form of a servant. As soon as His earthly ministry began, we see Him seeking out the vilest of sinners and sitting at meat with them. (Luke 15:2) Just before the "last supper," behold Him bending low at Peter's feet, and tenderly washing and wiping them; the one so soon to deny, even with an oath, that he had ever seen or known Him! Notice how the Holy Ghost introduced this marvelous scene!

In John 13:3 we read: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God, etc." The Creator serving the creature! Then, when just in view as it would seem, of the dark shadows of Calvary, the carnal disciples were wrangling as to which should be the greatest," He uttered the reproachful words which surely must have been forever engraved upon their hearts, and which one would think must have given their silly pride its final death blow: "I (the King of glory) am among you as One that SERVETH!" Words never to be fathomed until the Day of days shall come, when "we shall see Him as he is. As to His station in life we read in II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might become rich." To one who offered to follow Him wherever He might go, He said: "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Oh my soul, meditate upon these words and be willing to share the poverty of thy Lord. At one time when the people insisted upon making Him a King, He retired into a mountain alone with

His Father. In all of His teachings we notice that the glory of God, the Father, was His supreme desire. Was not that the one all-absorbing purpose for which He came into this miserable world? He did indeed set us the example, in His humanity, of a man wholly dead to self.

In John 5:41 He says: "I receive not honor from men," and in many other places in the same Gospel we hear Him declare that His words and His works come from the Father and that He could do nothing of Himself, that He did not come of Himself, but that all was of and from the Father. To accomplish, the great purpose for which He was sent, He willingly endured poverty, reproach and contempt throughout His life, was subjected to every form of temptation that man has ever known or can know, and finally stood before Pilate dumb "as a lamb before its shearers," meeting the calumnies of the false witnesses around Him with a heavenly meekness and silence which filled Pilate with amazement and awe. As he brought Him forth to the soldiers after scourging Him, arrayed in the mock robes and crown of royalty, he said unto them: "Behold, I bring Him forth to you that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Behold the man!" He never dreamed of the significance of those words. He was, and is, indeed, THE man. Was it not His marvelous humility at this time, which overwhelmed Pilate with confusion and caused him to stand trembling in His presence and repeatedly to plead for His life? Was it not His indescribable look of loving meekness, which pierced poor backsliding Peter like a sword?

See Him, reader, pushed and jostled this way and that by the jeering mob! "Then did they spit in His face (can it be?) and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands (Matthew 26:67); and again (Matthew 27:30), " They spit upon Him and took the reed and smote Him on the head," and with coarse laughter they bowed the knee and cried, "Hail! King of the Jews!" And then at last, He was led, an unresisting captive, to Calvary's cross, and there, with the howling crowd staring at and still deriding Him, this wonderful Man of the "meek and lowly" heart expired, with blessings and prayers for His enemies upon His lips. Truly, "He saved others, Himself He could not save," but oh, it was only because He would not. As you gaze with streaming tears upon this tremendous scene, does not your heart, precious reader, cry out "None of self and all of Thee? " And are you not better prepared now as we have followed Him from the manger to the cross, to obey the invitation which fell from His lips in His early ministry: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find REST unto your 'souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)

Oh, it is only after we have taken His yoke of lowliest service for God and man upon us that we are at rest; but there must first be the inner crucifixion, the cross in the heart, bringing us and holding us to the very lowest place at His feet before we can show forth to those about us a joyful willingness to serve whether in some obscure

corner unseen of men, or constantly before the gaze of the fickle and critical throng. But alas, how "few there be that find" this humble path and continue to walk therein! Do you not see that the source of all your restlessness is pride? You wish to be or do or say something great. The three great temptations which Satan brought to bear upon our Lord were the same as those with which he assailed Eve, and which we find mentioned in 1 John 2:16: "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Pride cast Satan out of heaven and it is the poison with which he has tainted the whole human race. The proud world hated the lowly Nazarene and has looked with contempt upon all His true followers, and will, until He comes to crown them as His Bride. The church of today, compromising with the world, strives to put a fashionable dress on Christianity so that she can attend Vanity Fair and bask in its smiles and receive its applause, and at the same time be foremost in the various activities of the church. But the little inner circle who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," who are wearing "the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price," creep closer to His side, willing to be little and unknown, loved and prized by Him alone."

Not only does the meek and lowly spirit bring us rest of soul, but it also brings mental and physical rest. And is there not great need of it in this age of feverish rush and worry and strife, even in Christian work? Listen to His word: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

And what was that mind? As quiet and humble as His Spirit. Were His sermons remarkable for great learning and eloquence and intellectual power? Far from it. On the other hand they were remarkable for their simplicity. How refreshing to read, "the common (unlearned) people heard Him gladly!" (Mark 12:39) And yet "His word was with power," and "with authority," and with such wisdom "that all the people wondered and said: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, never having learned?" Even the officers who had been sent to arrest Him, returned to Pilate without having been able to lay a hand upon Him, giving as their reason, "Never man spake like this man! " Oh, for the humble mind of Jesus! Do you not notice that the most Christ-like people you have met are the most quiet? They say but little, but how weighty are their words! Humility is never garrulous, never self-obtrusive. "For it is with feelings as with waters, the shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb."

When first converted, or rather, previous to that time, I greatly admired high intellectual attainments, and desired very much to have a well-trained mind, etc., but shortly after my conversion a friend gave me a poem which deeply impressed me; I can now recall but two lines of it:

"Thou canst not lay thine intellectual treasures
At the low footstool of the Crucified."

Is such the case with you, my reader? There is no question but that God will use our various talents and gifts for His own glory if they are really once

and forever yielded up to Him for the Holy Spirit to sanctify and use, but the gift of all gifts is the Spirit Himself, and He delights to use any kind of an instrument which is emptied of self, and is quite as likely to use an entirely illiterate man or woman as a college graduate.

This was most forcibly illustrated in our midst in the life and labors of Dwight L. Moody, who when he began working for God, was obliged to spell out many of the words in his Bible as he read it in the homes which he visited. Some words, which he could not pronounce at all, he would jump over and pass on to the next. But how the Holy Spirit has mown down hardest hearts before our dear departed brother, as he has, through Him, held up Christ before vast audiences of thousands of people all over the world. The blessed Holy Spirit is as meek as the Christ He comes to glorify, and it is an unspeakable joy and comfort to know that He brings in with Him, as He enters and completely fills our hearts, all His own lovely gifts, among which He mentions "gentleness " and "meekness," even the "meekness of wisdom." The power, which He imparts, is quite unlike human eloquence. Nothing can be more offensive than an affected humility, nothing more attractive and lovely than His humility within us.

Then with regard to the body, one can but observe also how quickly excited nerves and often severe pain give way when the sufferer sinks humbly at the feet of Jesus and breathes in His quiet, gentle Spirit. Self-planning, hurry (which usually means worry), and anxious care are often

at the bottom of the wretched physical condition of many of His dear people; these things combine to make a galling yoke indeed, one of Satan's own construction, which he delights to put upon any who will let him and to increase its weight until the victim sinks into his bed and perhaps into the grave. And physicians come and call it "heart failure," or "brain fever," or "nervous prostration," when God knows it was simply a lack of quiet humble abiding in Christ. Oh, get down before God and get still with His own sweet stillness.

"Lie still, oh heart, upon His breast,
For He can work if thou wilt rest;
The journey is too great for thee,
Unless the Lord thy shelter be."

A friend said to me once: "As I walked along the street this morning I thought, 'O how humble I do feel!'" Then she said: "In a moment I was proud of my humility!"

"And the devil did grin,
For his darling sin
Is pride that apes humility."

The gentleness of Christ alone constitutes true greatness. One passage in the Psalms concerning Him affects me very much. It is this "Thy gentleness hath made me great." (Psalms 18:34), or as in the margin: "With Thy meekness Thou hast multiplied me." To my mind, the perfect beauty, symmetry and even the power, majesty

and greatness of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ is summed up in His humility. Because of His deep humiliation, His obedience unto the shameful death of the cross, we read that God has "highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name." If you would know then, dear reader, the path to spiritual exaltation, consider whether you are really willing to take upon you the yoke of Christ's humility and poverty of spirit. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come!" God calls you repeatedly by His Word to the path, which Jesus trod, who has "left us an example that we should follow in His steps."

In closing let us prayerfully consider a few of the many exhortations and promises concerning humility, which He has given to His children in His Holy Word. First of all He dwells with the humble, (Isaiah 57:15); Delivers, (Job 22:29); Exalts, (James 4:10), (Luke 14:7-11). Such are the greatest in the kingdom, (Matthew 18:3-4); Giveth grace, (Proverbs 3:34); More and more, (James 4:6); Giveth wisdom, (Proverbs 11:2); Satisfaction, (Psalms 22:26); Guidance, (Psalms 25:9); Inherit the earth, (Psalms 37:11); Beautify with salvation, (Psalms 149:4); Increase in joy, (Isaiah 24:19); Hear the "good tidings," (Isaiah 56:1); Saints must put on humility, (Colossians 4:12-13); Clothed with, (1 Peter 5:5-6); Walk in, (Ephesians 4:1-2).

The very first words of the first recorded sermon of our Lord were these: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What this poverty of spirit means we can never know until we are willing and glad to be nothing,

that Jesus alone may be seen in us and our work, and He alone admired and praised. I had a most humbling experience at one time, which I have never forgotten, and I pray God that I never may. It came to my mind one day to issue a report of the Christian work in which I was engaged, and without consulting the Lord at all about it I began it, different friends undertaking to assist me in copying and arranging for the printer.

Never did I have such a time! Different parts of it were mislaid several times, all sorts of mistakes made by those whom I had asked to help. Oh, it was so vexatious! Thinking that it was Satan buffeting me (at least I tried to think so), I pushed on with it with feverish haste and, finally, after many delays. I succeeded in getting it into the printer's hands. Down deep in my heart I felt unrest, as though the Holy Spirit desired to say something to me about it, and I simply would not stop long enough to hear what it was. I hastened on with my work as usual and the matter was forgotten until the report arrived. And such a looking thing as it was! Full of typographical errors, and the price was much larger than I had expected or than it was worth. I felt ashamed to send them out, but as I had ordered a thousand, could not take time to correct them with my pen, and so, what was I to do?

My dear Father loved His impulsive erring child too well to let her go on unreprieved. As I would not wait at the first to hear what He had to say, He allowed an affliction of body to come upon me, which forced me to lay aside all work and lie

helplessly before Him. Then I cried to Him to know the meaning of the sickness, and for days could get no answer. At last while low down at His feet, I was shown that I should inquire concerning my reports, which had not yet been distributed, and was quickly reminded that I had run on ahead of Him, and had taken it for granted that He wished it, without "acknowledging" Him in the least in the matter. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." And so it was He who threw me into confusion so often while writing it instead of Satan! How grieved He was! I said: "Lord may I have something from the Word about it? " And immediately my eye fell upon these words (I am almost ashamed to write them): "Giving out that himself was some great one! " (Acts 8:9)

Humiliated and covered with confusion I wept bitter tears of repentance and begged to be forgiven, confessing that I had known all along that He wanted me to wait upon Him and learn His will in the matter. I really had not wanted to take the time to do so, and so followed my own reasonings, arguing that other workers always issued such reports, and why should not I? But I saw now that He was not opposed to the report itself, but that He had been set aside and "self," miserable self, had wrought in His place. "Oh!" I cried, "Lord, won't you bless it at all?" In a sad, reproachful tone which I can never forget, He said, bending lovingly over me: "No, my child, not as I would have done!" I felt that He was so good to bless it at all, even a little bit, after I had so grieved Him that I could only dry my tears and lay

my head upon His breast like a punished but forgiven child. After He had comforted me a while I said: "Will you let me correct those typographical errors in it?" and He answered "No." "Shall I charge anything for them?" (I had intended to do so), and He said: "Without money and without price." So the reports went forth full of blunders, and my important lesson was learned. May the recital of it to you, dear reader, lay me still lower at His feet, and prove a warning to you, as well.

As we search the Scriptures on this all-important subject we see that in the lives of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles, this grace predominated. Abraham said: "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." We read that Moses was "the meekest man upon the face of the earth," and how wonderfully God honored him. David said: "And who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer thus willingly unto Thee?" John the Baptist said, "He must increase but I must decrease." Job said: "I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.... I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." And Paul took the place as the "chief of sinners," and later on even of utter nothingness when he uttered the wonderful words: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Oh, in view of all these Scriptures, and in full view of Calvary today, shall we not gladly take "the lowest room," and just let the lovely humility of

Jesus be seen in us continually? Then shall all our words, our songs, our prayers, and all our service be acceptable to God and a blessing to men.

"Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Painful the humbling may be,
Yet low in the dust I'd lay me
That the world might my Savior see,
Rather be nothing, nothing,
To Him let their voices be raised,
He is the Fountain of blessing,
He only is meet to be praised."

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