

THE GRACE OF HUMILITY

**"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."
– Phil. 2:3.**

THOSE WHO naturally have a humble mind have no particular difficulty in esteeming others better than themselves. But there are some who naturally have another attitude of mind. This is not necessarily their fault, for they may have been born with larger self-conceit than were others. But even if we were born with humbleness of mind, we should need to take care that self-conceit and pride do not come in. Sometimes in their own heart some people feel boastful of the knowledge they possess. They like to shine, even though they know they have no more brilliancy than others; they would like to obscure the shining of others that they might be the more noticed in the darkness.

It would, therefore, be a safe matter for each of us to follow the Apostle's suggestion to cultivate this *humility of mind* and never allow it to be lost. "***Humble yourselves***, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that ***He may exalt you in due time***"; "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (I Pet. 5:6; Luke 14:11.) God would do this abasing, not of a vengeful spirit, but because the one who would vaunt himself must be brought low.

There might, however, be circumstances when some who appear to be vaunting themselves really are not doing so, but circumstances and conditions make it *seem* so. Therefore, to best fulfil the Apostle's injunction, we should, as he suggests in this text, cultivate the spirit of humility – not considering our own good qualities so much as those of others. If we have good qualities, we are glad; let us make use of them.

In comparing ourselves with others, let us look at our own blemishes. There are very few in whom we cannot see some good qualities, good traits. If, therefore, we look at our own imperfections

and the good qualities of others, we shall find ourselves more and more appreciative of others; and this will be of assistance to us in running the race.

As an illustration of seeing something to admire, even in our enemies, we have the suggestion of the old lady to her nieces. One niece said to the other, "Auntie can say something good about everybody. I believe she could say something good even about the Devil." "That is so," answered the other. "Let us ask her." Then she called, "Auntie, is there any good about the Devil?" "My dear," replied Auntie, "I wish we all had as much perseverance as he has."

So if we could find something in the Adversary that we could admire and commend, we can certainly find something in all others to admire and commend and to give them credit for. Thus we will cultivate the spirit that will be most helpful to ourselves for our future work.

The consideration of our own imperfections would, as we have suggested, make us very humble of mind and keep us in a very humble attitude of mind. This might discourage us unless we had the proper relationship with the Lord and His Word. We know that "all things work together for good to those who love God." (Rom. 8:28.) Through His Word our Lord has provided for such the "Balm of Gilead" for their encouragement, and the anointing oil and the comfort of the Scriptures.

The Lord does not cast us off if we are not wilfully wrongdoers and if we take in the right spirit the humiliating things. That disposition is what He wants. Those things which would humiliate us in the sight of others and in the sight of the Lord Himself, will, if we are rightly exercised by them, work together for good to us. Such He will bless and lift up and give an appreciation of His Love. This He purposes to do. We have every evidence that the Lord will give the necessary encouragement, and we have the assurance of the Scriptures that those who obey His Word to the *best of their ability* shall not be overcome.

For each one to look merely upon his own things, interests, welfare or talents and to ignore those of others would manifest a general selfishness and, consequently, a dearth of the Spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of love and generosity. In proportion as we are filled more and more with the Holy Spirit, Love, we shall find ourselves *interested in the welfare of others*. This was the mind, disposition, or spirit which was in our dear Redeemer, which [R4928 : page 441] He so wonderfully manifested, which we must copy and develop in our characters if we would ultimately be of the "little flock," who shall be joint-heirs with Christ in His glory, concerning whom God has predestinated that to be accepted with Him to this position they must be "copies of His Son." – Rom. 8:29.

OUR GREAT EXEMPLAR

That we may partially discern how our Lord Jesus exemplified this spirit of humility, the Apostle briefly sums up the story of His humiliation and shows how it led to His present exaltation. He points out to us that when our Lord Jesus was a spirit being, before He stooped to take our nature and to bear the penalty of our sin, He was in "a form of God" – a spirit form, a high and glorious condition. But instead of being moved selfishly and ambitiously to grasp for higher things than God had conferred upon Him – instead of seeking to set up a rival Empire, as Satan did – He did not meditate a *robbery of God* to make Himself the Father's *equal* (Satan's course), and say, "I will ascend above the stars [the bright ones, the angelic hosts], I will be *as* the Most High" [His peer, His equal]. Quite to the contrary of this, our Lord Jesus, "the beginning of the creation of God," was willing, in harmony with the Father's plan, to *humble* Himself, to take a *lower* nature and to do a work which would involve, not only a great deal of humiliation, but also a great deal of pain and suffering.

The Apostle points out how the "Only Begotten" proved His willingness and humility by complying with this arrangement; and that after He became a man He continued of this same humble spirit, willing

to carry out [R4929 : page 411] the Divine Plan to the *very letter* by dying as man's ransom-price; and not only so, but when it pleased the Father to require that the death should be a most ignominious one in every respect, perhaps beyond the requirements of the ransom merely, He did not draw back, but said, "*Thy will, not Mine*, be done," and stooped even to the ignominious "death of the cross!"

Here we have the *most wonderful demonstration of humility, meekness and obedience to God that ever was manifested or that could be conceived of*. And this is the pattern the Apostle points out that *we* should seek to copy. "Let this same [humble] mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." – Phil. 2:5-10.

This humility enabled our Lord to render perfect obedience, on account of which the Heavenly Father has so highly honored Him as to raise Him from the dead to the divine nature, to a station far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named. That this is the Apostle's argument is shown (verse 9) by the word "*wherefore*"; i.e., on this account, on account of this humility just described, God has highly exalted Him.

Not only did our Lord's beautiful and perfect humility and obedience demonstrate that He was *to the core* loyal to the Heavenly Father, but it also demonstrated that in Him the Father's spirit, Love, dwelt richly, for He shared the Father's love for the race He redeems. On this account also He is found worthy to be the Divine Agent in the blessing of all the families of the earth, according to the terms of the Divine Covenant made with Father Abraham.

Thus He has become the "Seed of Abraham" which is to bless the race redeemed; and hence it will be to Him that "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" when Jehovah's "due time" shall come for the pouring out of Divine blessings upon the redeemed world – that all may come to a knowledge of the truth and, if they will, into full harmony with God, and to eternal life.

Not only does the Apostle hold up the Lord Jesus as the great Example of a proper humility, self-abnegation and obedience to God in the interest of others, but he would also hold up before us the reward, the high exaltation of our Lord by the Father, the result or reward of His obedience, that we also might be encouraged and realize that, if faithful in following the footsteps of our Redeemer and sacrificing the advantages of the present to serve the Lord and His cause, then in due time we also may expect to be glorified with Him and to share His name and throne and work, as members of His anointed Body, His Church, His joint-heir.

Beloved, let us apply to ourselves the loving exhortation of the Apostle to the Church at Philippi, contained in the succeeding verses (Phil. 2:12-16), and continue in the way upon which we have entered, making more and more progress in the race-course, working out in ourselves through humility and obedience the character, the disposition of Christ, with fear and trembling, and thus working out each *our own share* in the great salvation to glory, honor and immortality which God hath promised.

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

We cannot work out our own *justification*, but being justified by the blood of Christ, and being called with the heavenly calling, we can make our calling and election *sure*. We can work out our own share in the great salvation to which we have been called in Christ by giving heed to the instructions of the Lord, by following the pattern which He has set for us; not that we shall attain perfection in the flesh, but merely perfection of will, of intention, of heart, and if we keep the body under to the extent of our ability, its weaknesses and imperfections will be reckoned as covered by the merit of our Lord, the Holy One.

It is encouraging also for us to know that this warfare against weakness and sin is not merely one of *our own*, but that God is for us, has called us, and is helping us. He already works in us, by His word of promise, and has led us thus far in the willing and the doing of His

will, His good pleasure; and He will continue thus to lead and to help us and to work in us by His Word of Truth, *if we will continue to give heed to His counsel*. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth – Thy Word is Truth." The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" to every one that so accepts it; and no greater stimulus to true godliness can be found than the "exceeding great and precious promises given unto us; that *by these* ye might be partakers of the divine nature." – 2 Pet. 1:4.

Moreover, in following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, running the race for the great prize set before us in the Gospel, we are not to *murmur* by the way, *finding fault with its difficulties and narrowness*; nor are we to dispute respecting it, nor seek to have any other way than that which Divine providence marks out for us, realizing that the Lord knows exactly what experiences are necessary to our development in the school of Christ; and realizing also that, if obedience were possible, while our mouths are full of complaints and dissatisfaction with the Lord and our lot which He has permitted, it would indicate that we are at least out of sympathy with the *spirit* of His arrangement; and such an obedience, if it were possible (but *it would not be possible*), would not meet the Divine approval, nor gain us the "prize." Hence, as the Apostle exhorts, we should "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke,...holding forth the Word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." – Verses 14-16.

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