

THE
Essential
Andrew
MURRAY
Collection

HUMILITY



ABIDING IN CHRIST



LIVING A PRAYERFUL LIFE

— 3 IN 1 EDITION —

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HUMILITY



foreword

The words in this book changed my life forever. There is no other way to say it. Some ten years ago I stumbled upon an old version of this long-lost treasure, hidden under a pile of ninety-nine-cent books on a liquidation table. At the time, I had so many misconceptions about humility. For one thing, I confused it with self-loathing. Humility is not the same as beating yourself up or letting other people put you down. Humility is not the same as low self-esteem and it's not the opposite of confidence. In fact, the truly humble person walks with absolute confidence, knowing that we are simply empty vessels through whom God wants to accomplish His work. When we understand true humility, we understand that it's not about us at all. It's about God. That's a tremendously freeing realization.

No writer has had more impact on my understanding of what it takes to become a vessel God can use than Andrew

Murray. No writer has ever drawn me nearer to God than Andrew Murray. He writes with the gentle heart of the Father. The healing touch of Jesus flows from the tip of his pen. And the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit pulsates through every word.

It's my fervent hope that this book will become a constant companion to thousands of believers. That it will occupy a special place—on your nightstand, desk, or coffee table—right next to your Bible. I urge you to prayerfully undertake a careful reading of *Humility*. I believe it will open your eyes to a whole new way of living, as God, the Almighty Three-in-One, speaks to you very personally through the pages set before you now.

His Vessel,
Donna Partow
Author, *Becoming a Vessel
God Can Use*

preface

There are three great motivations to humility: it becomes us as creatures; it becomes us as sinners; and it becomes us as saints. Humility is first seen in the angels, in man before the Fall, and in Jesus as the Son of Man. In our fallen state, humility points us to the only way by which we can return to our rightful place as creatures. As Christians, the mystery of grace teaches us that as we lose ourselves in the overwhelming greatness of redeeming love, humility becomes to us the consummation of everlasting blessedness.

It is common in Christian teaching to find the second aspect taught almost exclusively. Some have gone so far as to say that we must keep on sinning in order to remain humble! Others have thought that the strength of self-condemnation is the secret of humility. As a result, the Christian life has suffered where believers have not been guided to see that even in our relationships as creatures, nothing is more natural and

beautiful and blessed than to be nothing in order that God may be everything. It needs to be made clear that it is not sin that humbles but grace. It is the soul occupied with God in His wonderful glory 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 our attention to the humility that becomes us as creatures. It is not only because the connection between humility and sin is so commonly taught but also 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 to be our example in His lowliness, we need to understand the principles in which this quality is rooted and where we find the common ground to stand with Him. If we are to be humble not only before God but toward men, and if humility is to be our joy, we must see that it is not only the mark of shame because of sin, but apart from sin, it is being clothed with the very beauty and blessedness of Jesus. We will see that just as Jesus found glory in taking the form of a servant, so when He said to us, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26), He was teaching us the truth that there is nothing so divine as being the servant and helper of all. The faithful servant who recognizes his position finds real pleasure in supplying the wants of the master or his guests. When we realize 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, and that to prove it in being servants of

all is the highest fulfillment of our destiny as men created in the image of God.

When I look back upon my own Christian experience, or at the church of Christ as a whole, I am amazed at how little humility is seen as the distinguishing feature of discipleship. In our preaching and in our living, in our daily interaction in our families and in our social life, as well as fellowship with other Christians, how easy it is to see that humility is not esteemed the cardinal virtue, the root from which grace can grow and the one indispensable condition of true fellowship with Jesus. The fact that it is possible for anyone to say of those who claim to seek holiness that the profession has not been accompanied with increasing humility, is a loud call to all earnest Christians, whatever truth there be in the charge, to prove that meekness and lowliness of heart are the chief marks by which they who follow the Lamb of God are to be known.

chapter one
humility: the glory of the creature

“Humility is the proper estimate of oneself.”

CHARLES SPURGEON

They lay their crowns before the throne and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Revelation 4:10–11

When God created the universe, it was with the objective of making those he created partakers of His perfection and blessedness, thus showing forth the glory of His love and wisdom and power. God desired to reveal himself in and through His creatures by communicating to them as much of His own goodness and glory as they were capable of receiving. But this communication was not meant to give created beings something they could possess in themselves, having full charge and access apart from Him. Rather, God as the ever-living, ever-present, ever-acting One, who upholds all things by the word of His power, and in whom all things exist, meant that the relationship of His creatures to himself would be one of unceasing, absolute dependence. As truly as God by His power once created all things, so by that same power must God every moment maintain all things. We as His creatures have not only to look back to the origin and beginning of our existence and acknowledge that we owe everything to God—our chief care, highest virtue, and only happiness, now and throughout all eternity—but we must also present ourselves as empty vessels, in which God can dwell and manifest His power and goodness.

The life God bestows is imparted not once for all but each moment by the unceasing operation of His mighty power. Humility, the place of entire dependence upon God, is from the very nature of things the first duty and the highest virtue of His creatures.

And so pride—the loss of humility—is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now-fallen angels began to look upon themselves with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Likewise, it was when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride—the desire to be as God—into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from their high estate into the wretchedness to which all humankind has sunk. In heaven and on earth, pride or self-exaltation is the very gateway to hell.¹

And so it follows that nothing can save us but the restoration of our lost humility, the original and only true relationship of the creature to its God. And so 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 a man. The humility we see in Him possessed Him in heaven; it brought Him here. Here on earth “He humbled himself and became obedient to death”; His humility gave His death its value, and so became our redemption. And now the salvation He imparts is nothing less and nothing else than a communication of His own life and death, His own disposition and spirit, His own humility, as the ground and root of His relationship with God and His redeeming work. Jesus Christ took the place and fulfilled the destiny of man as a creature by His life of perfect

humility. His humility became our salvation. His salvation is our humility.

The life of those who are saved, the saints, must bear this stamp of deliverance from sin and full restoration to their original state; their whole relationship to God and to man 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 no abiding faith or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which virtue takes root; a lack of humility is the explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a virtue along with the others, but is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God and allows Him, as God, to do all.

God has so constituted us as reasonable beings that the greater the insight into the true nature or the absolute need of a command, the quicker and more complete will be our obedience to it. The call to humility has been too little regarded in the church because its true nature and importance have been too little apprehended. It is not something that we bring to God, or that He bestows; it is simply the sense of entire nothingness that comes when we see how truly God is everything. When the creature realizes that this is a place of honor, and consents to be—with his will, his mind, and his affections—the vessel in which the life and glory of God are to work and manifest themselves, he sees that humility is simply acknowledging the truth of his position as creature and yielding to God His place.

In the life of earnest Christians who pursue and profess

holiness, humility ought to be the chief mark of their uprightness. Often it is said that this is not the case. Perhaps one reason is that the teaching and example of the church has not placed the proper importance on humility. As strong as sin is a motive for it, there is one still wider and mightier influence: it is that which made the angels, Jesus himself, and the holiest saints humble. It is the first and chief mark of the relationship of the creature to God, of the Son to the Father—it is the secret of blessedness, the desire to be nothing, that allows God to be all in all.

I am sure there are many Christians who will confess that their experience has been very much like my own. I had long known the Lord without realizing that meekness and lowliness of heart are to be the distinguishing feature of the disciple, just as they were of the Master. And further, that this humility is not something that will come of itself, but that 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 oft-repeated instructions Jesus gave His disciples on this point, and how slow they were to understand them.

Let us at the very outset of our meditations, then, admit that there is nothing so natural to man, nothing so insidious and hidden from our sight, nothing so difficult and dangerous as pride. And acknowledge that nothing but a very determined and persevering waiting on God will reveal how lacking we are in the grace of humility and how powerless we are to obtain what we seek. We must study the character of Christ until our souls are filled with the love and admiration of His lowliness.

We must believe that when we are broken under a sense of pride and our inability to cast it out, Jesus Christ himself will come to impart this grace as a part of His wonderful life within us.

chapter two
humility: the secret of redemption

“If you are looking for an example of humility,
look at the cross.”

THOMAS AQUINAS

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

Philippians 2:5–9

No tree can grow except on the root from which it sprang. Through all its existence it can only live by the life that was in the seed that gave it being. The full apprehension of this truth in its application to the first and the Second Adam cannot but help us to understand both the need and the nature of the redemption that is in Jesus.

The Need

When the Old Serpent, who had been cast out of heaven for his pride, whose whole nature was pride, spoke temptation into Eve's ear, those words carried with them the very poison of hell. And when she listened, and yielded her desire and her will to the prospect of being like God, knowing good and evil, the poison entered into her soul, destroying forever that blessed humility and dependence upon God that would have been our everlasting inheritance and happiness. Her life and the life of the race that sprang from her became corrupted to its very root with that most terrible of all sins and curses—Satan's pride. All the wretchedness of which this world has been the scene, all its wars and bloodshed among the nations,

all its selfishness and suffering, all its vain ambitions and jealousies, all its broken hearts and embittered lives, with all its daily unhappiness, have their origin in what this cursed pride—our own or that of others—has brought upon us. It is pride that made redemption necessary; it is from our pride that we need, above everything else, to be redeemed. And our insight into the need of redemption will largely depend upon our knowledge of the terrible nature of the power of pride that has entered our being.

As we have said, no tree can grow except on the root from which it sprang. The pride that Satan brought from hell and whispered into the life of humankind is working daily, hourly, and with mighty power throughout the world. Men and women suffer from it; they fear and fight and flee it; and yet they don't always know where it has come from or how it has gained such terrible supremacy. No wonder they don't know how to overcome it. Pride has its root and strength in a spiritual power, outside of us as well as within us; as needful as it is that we confess and deplore it, it is satanic in origin. If this leads us to utter despair of ever conquering or casting it out, it will lead us all the sooner to that supernatural power in which alone our deliverance is to be found—the redemption of the Lamb of God. The hopeless struggle against the workings of self and pride within us may indeed become still more hopeless as we think of the power of darkness behind it; the utter despair will fit us better for realizing and accepting a power and a life outside of ourselves, the humility of heaven brought down by the Lamb of God to cast out Satan and his pride.

Even as we need to look to the first Adam and his failure to know the power of sin within us, we need to know the Second Adam and His power to give us the life of humility as real and abiding and enabling as was the life of pride. We have our life from and in Christ even more certainly than from and in Adam. We are to walk “rooted in him, holding fast the head from whom the whole body increases with the increase of God.” The life of God that entered human nature through the Incarnation, is the root in which we are to stand and grow; it is the same almighty power that worked there, at the Cross, and onward to the Resurrection, which works daily in us. It is of utmost importance that we study to know and trust the life that has been revealed in Christ as the life that is now ours, and waits for our consent to gain possession and mastery of our whole being.

In view of this, it is important that we know who Christ is, especially the chief characteristic that is the root and essence of His character as our Redeemer. There can be but one answer: it is His humility. What is the Incarnation but His heavenly humility, His emptying himself and becoming man? What is His life on earth but humility; His taking the form of a servant? And what is His atonement but humility? “He humbled himself and became obedient to death.” And what is His ascension and His glory but humility exalted to the throne and crowned with glory? “He humbled himself . . . therefore God exalted Him to the highest place.” In heaven, where He was one with the Father; in His birth, His life, and His death on earth; in His return to the right hand of the Father—it is all humility. Christ is the expression of the humility of God

embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save us. As the love and condescension of God makes Him the benefactor and helper and servant of all, so Jesus of necessity was the Incarnate Humility. And so He is still, in the midst of the throne, the meek and lowly Lamb of God.

If this is the root of the tree, its nature must be seen in every branch and leaf and fruit. If humility is the first, the all-inclusive grace of the life of Jesus—if humility is the secret of His atonement—then the health and strength of our spiritual life will depend entirely upon our putting this grace first and making humility the chief quality we admire in Him, the chief attribute we ask of Him, the one thing for which we sacrifice all else.¹

Is it any wonder that the Christian life is so often weak and fruitless, when the very root of the Christian life is neglected or unknown? Is it any wonder that the joy of salvation is so little felt, when that by which Christ brings it is so seldom sought? Until a humility that rests in nothing less than the end and death of self, and which gives up all the honor of men as Jesus did to seek the honor that comes from God alone (which absolutely makes and counts itself nothing) that God may be all, that the Lord alone may be exalted—until such a humility is what we seek in Christ above our chief joy, and welcome at any price, there is very little hope of a faith that will conquer the world.

I cannot too greatly impress upon my readers the need of realizing the lack there is today of humility within Christian

circles. There is so little of the meek and lowly Lamb of God in those who are called by His name. Let us consider how our lack of love, indifference to the needs and feelings of others, even sharp comments and hasty judgments that are often excused as being honest and straightforward, are thwarting the effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit on others. Manifestations of temper and touchiness and irritation, feelings of bitterness and estrangement, have their root in nothing but pride. Pride creeps in almost everywhere, and the assemblies of the saints are not exceptions. Let's ask ourselves what would be the effect if all of us were guided by the humility of Jesus, that the cry of our whole heart, night and day, would be, "Oh, for the humility of Jesus in myself and all around me!" Let us honestly fix our heart on our lack of humility—that which has been revealed in the likeness of Christ's life, in the whole character of His redemption—and realize how little we know of Christ and His salvation.

Study the humility of Jesus. This is the secret, the hidden root of redemption. Believe with your whole heart that Christ, whom God has given you, will enter in to dwell and work within you and make you what the Father would have you to be.