

Humility 103

Andrew Murray's Sixth and Seventh Chapters in "Humility"

(Language updated by Ted Hildebrandt, 2010, additional editing & emphasis by Pastor Chris)

Monday' Reading:

"For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." 1 John 4:20

What a solemn thought, that our love to God will be measured by our everyday communion with our fellow humans and the love it displays; and that our love to God will be found to be a delusion, except its truth is proved in standing the test of daily life with the rest of humanity. It is even so with our humility. It is easy to think we humble ourselves before God: humility towards others will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real; that humility has ***taken up its abode in us***; and become our very nature. When in the presence of God lowliness of heart has become, not a posture we pray to Him, but the very spirit of our life, it will manifest itself in all our bearing towards all others. The lesson is one of deep import: 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. It is in our most unguarded moments that we really show and see what we are.

Is not this what Jesus taught? It was when the disciples disputed who should be greatest; when He saw 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 one another.

It is even so in the teaching of Paul.

"Honor one another above yourselves." Romans 12:10

"Do not be proud..." Romans 12:16

"Love...does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud." 1 Corinthians 13:4

"Let us not become conceited..." Galatians 5:26

"Be completely humble and gentle..." Ephesians 4:2

"...in humility value others above yourselves..." Philipians 2:3-4

"clothe yourselves with...humility..." Colossians 3:12

Monday's Reflection:

Look up the passages above and read them in full one by one. Spend time meditating on what Paul teaches in them.

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Tuesday's Reading

It is in our relation to one another, in our treatment of one another, that the true lowliness of mind and the heart of humility are to be seen. Our humility before God has no value, but 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, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34) The question is often asked, how we can count others better than ourselves, when we see that 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 You, no longer compares itself with others. It has given up forever every thought of self in God's presence; it meets its fellow humans as one who is nothing, and seeks nothing for itself; who 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 the true spirit and posture of the servant. The humble man looks upon every, the feeblest and unworthiest, child of God, and honors them and prefers them in honor as the son and daughter 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.

Tuesday's Reflection:

Make a list of all those you have thought of yourself better than. Read over that list and pray for each person as though they have infinite value as children of God. Ask God to remove any spirit of conceit that would consider yourself better than others.

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Wednesday's Reading

The humble person feels no jealousy or envy. They can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before them. They can bear to hear others praised and themselves forgotten, because in God's presence they have learned to say with Paul, "I am nothing." They have received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and sought not His own honor, as the spirit of his life.

Amid what are considered the temptations to impatience and touchiness, to hard thoughts and sharp words, which come from the failings and sins of fellow-Christians, the humble person carries the oft-repeated injunction in their heart, and shows it in their life, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone" (Col. 3:13) They have learned that in putting on the Lord Jesus they have 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. Their 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 longsuffering, the sweet and lowly gentleness recognized as the mark of the Lamb of God.

In striving after the higher experiences of the Christian life, the believer is often in danger of aiming at and rejoicing in what one might be called the more human, the manly, 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 which Jesus first taught upon earth, because He brought them from heaven; those which are more distinctly connected with His cross and the death of self, poverty of spirit, meekness, humility, lowliness, are scarcely thought of or valued. Therefore, let us put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; and let us prove our Christlikeness, not only in our zeal for saving the lost, but before all in our communion with fellow Christians, forbearing and forgiving one another, even as the Lord forgave us.

Fellow-Christians, do let us study the Bible portrait of the humble man. And let us ask our brethren, 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.

Wednesday's Practice:

Do an inventory of your last week. Where and with whom were you most prone to impatience, judgement, anger, divisiveness, fear and quick responses? What is the source of pride you can identify in these situations and relationships? Pray for God to reveal them and take them from you.

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Thursday's Reading

"I knew Jesus, and He was very precious to my soul: but I found something in me that would not keep sweet and patient and kind. I did what I could to keep it down, but it was there. I besought Jesus to do something for me, and when I gave Him my will, He came to my heart, and took out all that would not be sweet, all that would not be kind, all that would not be patient, and then He shut the door." George Foxe

Once again I repeat what I have said before. I feel deeply that we have very little conception of what the Church suffers from the lack of this divine humility, the nothingness that makes room for God to prove His power. The one reason? The lack of humility which counts itself nothing, which rejoices in becoming and being counted the least, and only seeks, like Jesus, to be the servant, the helper and comforter of others, even the lowest and unworthiest.

How can it be that Christians who have joyfully given up themselves for Christ, find it so hard to give up themselves for their brothers and sisters? 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 Christ-like humility is what it, like Christ, places and preaches first, as what is in very deed 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, 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, only seek to serve one another in love.

The great test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain, is truth and life, will be whether it be manifest in the increasing humility it produces. In the creature, humility is the one thing needed to allow God's holiness to dwell in them and shine through them. In Jesus, the Holy One of God who makes us holy, a divine humility was the secret of His life and His death and His exaltation; the one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God and others which marks us. ***Humility is the bloom and the beauty of holiness.***

Thursday's Practice

In what ways have you misunderstood or place little value on the kind of humility Murray speaks of in the reading you have done this week? Why has humility like this been so lacking in your mind and heart?

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Friday's Reading

The chief mark of counterfeit holiness is its lack of humility. Every seeker after holiness needs to be on their guard, lest unconsciously what was begun in the spirit be perfected in the flesh, and pride creep in where its presence is least expected. Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. There is no place or position so sacred but the Pharisee can enter there. Pride can lift its head in the very temple of God, and make His worship the scene of its self exaltation. Since the time Christ so exposed his pride, the Pharisee has put on the garb of the publican, and the confessor of deep sinfulness equally with the professor of the highest holiness, must be on the watch. Just when We are most anxious to have our heart the temple of God, we shall find the two men coming up to pray. And the publican will find that his danger is not from the Pharisee beside him, who despises him, but the Pharisee within who commends and exalts. In God's temple, when we think we are in the holiest of all, in the presence of His holiness, let us beware of pride. *"One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them."* (Job 1:6)

"God, I thank you that I am not like...this tax collector." (Luke 18:11)

It is in that which is just cause for thanksgiving, it is in the very thanksgiving which we render to God, it may be in the very confession that God has done it all, that self finds its cause of complacency. Yes, even when in the temple the language of penitence and trust in God's mercy alone is heard, the Pharisee may take up the note of praise, **and in thanking God be congratulating himself. Pride can clothe itself in the garments of praise or of penitence.** Even though the words, "I am not like..." are rejected and condemned, their spirit may too often be found in our feelings and language towards our fellow worshippers and humanity. Would you know if this really is so, just listen to the way in which Churches and Christians often speak of one another. How little of the meekness and gentleness of Jesus is to be seen. It is so little remembered that deep humility must be the keynote of what the servants of Jesus say of themselves or each other. Is there not many a Church or assembly of the saints, many a mission or convention, many a society or committee, even many a mission away in heathendom, where the harmony has been disturbed and the work of God hindered, because people who are counted saints have proved in touchiness and haste and impatience, in self-defense and self-assertion, in sharp judgments and unkind words, that they did not each reckon others better than themselves, and that their holiness has but little in it of the meekness of the saints? In their spiritual history folks may have had times of great humbling and brokenness, but what a different thing this is from being clothed with humility, from having an humble spirit, from having that lowliness of mind in which each counts himself the servant of others, and so shows forth the very mind which was also in Jesus Christ.

Friday's Practice:

Pray the humbling prayer found in the Humility 101 practice anew today. Pay special attention to the kinds, forms, and degrees of pride God is revealing to you found in your heart.

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Saturday's Reading

"a people who continually provoke me to my very face...who say, 'Keep away; don't come near me, for I am too sacred for you!'" (Isaiah 65:3a, 5a"

What a parody on holiness! Jesus the Holy One is the humble One: the holiest will ever be the humblest. There is none holy but God: we have as much of holiness as we have of God. And according to what we have of God will be our real humility, because humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all. The holiest will be the humblest.

Alas! though the bare-faced boasting Jew of the days of Isaiah is not often to be found, even our manners have taught us not to speak thus, how often his spirit is still seen, whether in the treatment of fellow saints or of the children of the world. In the spirit in which opinions are given, and work is undertaken, and faults are exposed, how often, though the garb be that of the publican, the voice is still that of the Pharisee: *"God, I thank you that I am not like..."*

Where the spirit of love is shed abroad in the heart, where the divine nature comes to a full birth where Christ the meek and lowly Lamb of God is truly formed within, there is given the power of a perfect love that forgets itself and finds its blessedness in blessing others, in bearing with them and honoring them, however feeble they be. Where this love enters, there God enters. And where God has entered in His power, and reveals Himself as All, there the creature becomes nothing. And where the creature becomes nothing before God; it cannot be anything but humble towards the fellow-creature. The presence of God becomes not a thing of times and seasons, but the covering under which the soul ever dwells, and its deep abasement before God becomes the holy place of His presence whence all its words and works proceed.

May God teach us that our thoughts and words and feelings concerning others are His test of our humility towards Him, and that our humility before Him is the only power that can enable us to be always humble with others. Our humility must be the life of Christ, the Lamb of God, within us.

O bothers and sisters! let us beware. Unless we make, with each advance in what we think holiness, the increase of humility our study, we may find that we have been delighting in beautiful thoughts and feelings, in solemn acts of consecration and faith, while the only sure mark of the presence of God, the disappearance of self, was all the time wanting. Come and let us flee to Jesus, and hide ourselves in Him until we be clothed upon with His humility. That alone is our holiness.

Saturday's Practice:

Flee to Jesus today, take a sabbath to settle into Jesus' promised rest. Take His yoke upon you. Release all need to be something, and become nothing but a vessel to be filled with the Spirit of God.