

humility

ANDREW MURRAY

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Humility: The Journey Toward Holiness

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Updated for today's reader

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Andrew Murray, Humility

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ANDREW MURRAY was born in South Africa in 1828. After receiving his education in Scotland and Holland, he returned to South Africa and spent many years as both pastor and missionary. He was a staunch advocate of biblical Christianity. He is best known for his many devotional books.

*Lord Jesus,
may our holiness be
perfect humility.
Let your perfect humility
be our holiness.*

contents

Foreword by Donna Partow	8
Preface	10
1. Humility: The Glory of the Creature	13
2. Humility: The Secret of Redemption	21
3. Humility in the Life of Jesus	29
4. Humility in the Teaching of Jesus	35
5. Humility in the Disciples of Jesus	43
6. Humility in Daily Life	51
7. Humility and Holiness	59
8. Humility and Sin	67
9. Humility and Faith	75
10. Humility and Death to Self	81
11. Humility and Happiness	89
12. Humility and Exaltation	95
A Prayer for Humility	103
Notes	107

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.