

Special Section: Humility

Humility And Faith

We can never have more faith than we have humility.

By Andrew Murray

In an address I lately heard, the speaker said that the blessings of the higher Christian life were often like the objects exposed in a shop window—one could see them clearly and yet could not reach them. If told to stretch out his hand and take, a man would answer, “I cannot; there is a thick pane of plate glass between me and them.” Likewise, Christians may clearly see the blessed promises of perfect peace and rest, of overflowing love and joy, of abiding communion and fruitfulness, and yet feel that there is something in between hindering the true possession. And what might that be? Nothing but pride.

The promises made to faith are so free and sure, the invitations and encouragements are so strong, and the mighty power of God on which it may count is so near and free, that only something which hinders faith can hinder the blessing from being ours . . . Jesus discloses to us that it is indeed pride which makes faith impossible. “How can ye believe, which rather honor one of another?” As we see how, in their very nature, pride and faith are irreconcilably at variance, we will learn that faith and humility are at root one. We will learn that we can never have more of true faith than we have of true humility . . . We may indeed have strong intellectual conviction and assurance of the truth while pride is kept in the heart, but . . . it makes the living faith—which has power with God—an impossibility.

Humility prepares us for faith.

We need only think for a moment what faith is. Is it not the confession of nothingness and helplessness, the surrender and the waiting to let God work?

Is it not in itself the most humbling thing there can be—the acceptance of our place as dependents, who can claim or get or do nothing but what grace bestows? Humility is simply the disposition which prepares the soul for living on trust. And every, even the most secret, breathing of pride—in self seeking, self-will, self-confidence, or self-exultation—is just the strengthening of that self which cannot enter the kingdom or possess the things of the kingdom, because it refuses to allow God to be what He is and must be—the all in all.

Faith is the organ or sense for the perception and apprehension of the heavenly world and its blessings. Faith seeks the glory that comes from God—that only comes where God is all. As long as we take glory from one another, as long as ever we seek and love and jealously guard the glory of this life—the honor and reputation that comes from men—we do not seek and cannot receive the glory that comes from God. Pride renders faith impossible. Salvation comes through a cross and a crucified Christ. Salvation is the fellowship with the crucified Christ in the Spirit of His cross. Salvation is union with, delight and participation in, the humility of Jesus. Is it any wonder that our faith is so feeble when pride still reigns so much, and we have hardly learned to long or pray for humility as the most needful and blessed part of salvation?

An Alliance for His Glory

Humility and faith are more nearly allied in Scripture than many know. See it in the life of Christ. There are two cases in which He spoke of a great faith. In the first instance, the centurion said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." At this humility, Jesus marveled and replied, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!" (Matthew 8:8, 10, *KJV*). In the second case, the mother humbly spoke, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs." And the Lord answered her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" (Matthew 15:27–28, *KJV*). It is the humility that brings a soul to be nothing before God that also removes every hindrance to faith. Humility makes the soul fear that it would dishonor Him by not trusting Him wholly.

Brethren, have we not here the cause of failure in the pursuit of holiness? Is it not this that made our consecration and our faith so superficial and so short lived? We had no idea to what an extent pride and self were still secretly working within us. We were not aware of how God alone, by His incoming and His mighty power, could cast them out. We did not understand how nothing but the new and divine nature, entirely taking the place of the old self, could make us really humble. We did not know that absolute, unceasing, universal humility must be the root disposition of every prayer and every approach to God, as well as of every dealing with man. We did not realize that we might as well attempt to see without eyes, or live without breath, as believe or draw near to God or rest in His love without an all-pervading humility and lowliness of heart.

"How can ye believe, which rather honor one of another?" Brethren! Nothing can cure you of the desire to receive glory from men, or of the sensitivity and pain and anger which come when it is not given, except giving yourself to seek only the glory that comes from God. Let the glory of the all-glorious God be everything to you. You will be freed from the glory of men and of self, and be content and glad to be nothing. Out of this nothingness you will grow strong in faith, giving glory to God. You will find that the deeper you sink in humility before Him, the nearer He is to fulfill every desire of your faith.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

ANDREW MURRAY (1828–1917) was a Dutch Reformed leader in South Africa, where he was born of missionary parents. He authored 240 books and pamphlets, most of which call for a rich, personal devotional life. Adapted from *Humility* by Andrew Murray; © 1982 by Whitaker House. Used by permission of Whitaker House, 30 Hunt Valley Circle, New Kensington, PA 15068. All rights reserved.