“Be clothed with Humility”

1 Peter 5:5

1 Peter 5:5-6 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Be clothed with humility.

Humility illustrated and enforced

I. Humility illustrated.

1. When St. Austin was asked what was the first grace of a Christian, he answered, humility: what the second, humility: what the third, humility. This grace is more fundamental to the nature of all true religion than any other grace whatever. The foundation of repentance is laid in an abasing sense of our guilt. The reason why men are not humble is, that they do not see the greatness of God. It is the effect of all knowledge to humble us, by producing a sense of our distance from the object which we contemplate: the farther we advance in knowledge, the more this distance widens on our view: hence where an Infinite Being, God, is the object of contemplation, there must be infinite scope for humility in His worshippers. The gospel is peculiarly adapted to produce this feeling: this is its very end and effect: “no flesh shall glory in His presence; the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” This effect arises from the very constitution of the gospel; as it is a revelation of the free grace of God to sinners, without any respect to moral or natural differences of character.

II. The motive by which such a temper is recommended.

1. “God resisteth the proud.” The expression is very emphatic; He sets Himself in battle array against him; marks him as an object of peculiar indignation. It is not so said of any other temper. When the heart is filled by pride, nothing but spiritual barrenness and hardness can ensue. In a word, the proud are equally disqualified for the duties of Christianity here, and for the blessings of glory hereafter.

2. “But,” as it is added, “He giveth grace to the humble.” The same words are used by the apostle James, with the additional expression, “He giveth more grace.” The humble feel their poverty, and pray for grace; and their prayers are heard.

III. Let us, then, seek and cherish this grace, the only temper that can make us shine before God, the only one that can render us blessings to each other. The apostle exhorts us to “be clothed with humility.” Men always use and wear their clothing, and we are to be clothed with this grace as a permanent vesture. It should pervade every part of our character; all the faculties of the mind: it should regulate the understanding, the will, and the affections. And then all other graces will shine the brighter through the veil of humility: it will shed a cheering influence on all. (R. Hall, M. A.)

The loftiness of humility

This is St. Peter’s command. Are we really inclined to obey it? For, if we are, there is nothing more easy. Whosoever wishes to get rid of pride may do so. Whosoever wishes to be humble need not go far to humble himself. But how? Simply by being honest with himself, and looking at himself as he is. The world and human nature look up to the proud successful man, One is apt to say, “Happy is the man who has plenty to be proud of. Happy is the man who can divide the spoil of this world with the successful of this world. Happy is the man who can look down on his fellow men, and stand over them, and manage them, and make use of them, and get his profit out of them.” But that is a mistake. That is the high-mindedness which goes before a fail, which comes not from above, but is always earthly, often sensual, and sometimes devilish. The true and safe high-mindedness, which comes from above, is none other than humility. Better to think of those who are nobler than ourselves, even though by so doing we are ashamed of ourselves all day long. What loftier thoughts can man have? What higher and purer air can a man’s soul breathe? The truly high-minded man is not the proud man, who tries to get a little pitiful satisfaction from finding his brother men, as he chooses to fancy, a little weaker, a little more ignorant, a little more foolish, than his own weak, ignorant, foolish, and perhaps ridiculous, self. Not he; but the man who is always looking upwards to goodness, to good men, and to the all-good God; filling his soul with the sight of an excellence to which he thinks he can never attain; and saying, with David, “All my delight is in the saints that dwell in the earth, and in those who excel in virtue.” And why does God resist and set Himself against the proud? To turn him out of his evil way, of course, if by any means he may be converted and live. And how does God give grace to the humble? Listen to Plutarch, a heathen; a good and a wise man, though; and one who was not far from the kingdom of God, or he would not have written such words as these: “It is our duty,” he says, “to turn our minds to the best of everything; so as not merely to enjoy what we read, but to be improved by it.” And we shall do that by reading the histories of good and great men, which will, in our minds, produce an emulation and eagerness which may stir us up to imitation. We may be pleased with the work of a man’s hands, and yet set little store by the workman. Perfumes and fine colours we may like well enough: bat that will not make us wish to be perfumers, or painters: but goodness, which is the work, not of a man’s hands, but of his soul, makes us not only admire what is done, but long to do the like. “And therefore,” he says, “he thought it good to write the lives of famous and good men, and to set their examples before his countrymen. And having begun to do this,” he says in another place, “for the sake of others, he found himself going on, and liking his labour, for his own sake; for the virtues of those great men served him as a looking glass, in which he might see how, more or less, to order and adorn his own life.” “Indeed, it could be compared,” he says, “to nothing less than living with the great souls who were dead and gone, and choosing out of their actions all that was noblest and worthiest to know. What greater pleasure could there be than that,” he asks, “or what better means to improve his soul? By filling his mind with pictures of the best and worthiest characters, he was able to free himself from any low, malicious, mean thoughts, which he might catch from bad company. If he was forced at times to mix with base men, he could wash out the stains of their bad thoughts and words, by training himself in a calm and happy temper to view those noble examples.” So says the wise heathen. Was not he happier, wiser, better, a thousand times, thus keeping himself humble by looking upwards, than if he had been feeding his petty pride by looking down, and saying, “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are”? If you wish, then, to be truly high-minded, by being truly humble, read of, and think of, better men, wiser men, braver men, more useful men than you are. Above all, if you be Christians, think of Christ Himself. (C. Kingsley, M. A.)

On humility

I. I shall mention some of the cases in which humility of soul will show itself.

1. The natural powers of the human mind will be spoken of with modesty.

2. When he thinks of his graces and attainments, the Christian is clothed with humility.

3. Another genuine expression of humility is a ready acknowledgment of our constant dependence.

II. I shall recommend the practice of humility.

1. That “he who humbleth him self shall be exalted,” holds good with regard to our connections amongst our fellow men,

2. The advantages of this grace are not confined to temporal consequences; they extend to a future and eternal state.

3. The inhabitants of heaven are celebrated for this grace; and any who are unfurnished with it cannot be members of their society.

4. To recommend the cultivation and practice of this grace, remember our blessed Lord exemplified it in the whole of His conduct.

III. I shall direct to an improvement of this discourse.

1. Though the language of the text speaks of humility as something that is external, “Be clothed with humility,” nevertheless, if the heart is not humbled, all is empty show.

2. Let it be remembered that this grace is needful in every rank and condition of life.

3. Consider the exhortation, “Be clothed with humility,” as given by the apostle Peter; and it will direct us to a very particular improvement. “Be clothed with humility.” This grace is not only a robe of ornament, but a shield of defence. When it adorns the heart and life, it defends the head also in the day of battle. (Robert Foote.)

Humility

I. The nature and the effects of humility.

1. Humility, as it relates to our own private thoughts and judgment, requires that we should entertain no better an opinion of ourselves than we deserve. To judge too severely of ourselves, and to fancy we are guilty of faults from which we are free, cannot be humility, because there can be no virtue in mistake and ignorance. Only as we have all a propensity to extenuate our defects, and to overrate our good deeds, it is safest to correct this bent by forcing the mind somewhat towards the contrary way, and frequently to review our failings, and the many causes which we have of rejecting all conceited thoughts. The imperfections common to human nature are these: Mortality; a stronger propensity to evil than to good; an understanding liable to be frequently deceived, and a knowledge which at the best is much confined. The infirmities peculiar to ourselves are those defects either in goodness, or in knowledge, or in wisdom, by which we are inferior to other persons. To be sensible of these faults, is humility as it relates to ourselves: to overlook them is pride.

2. True humility, as it influences our behaviour towards our Maker, produces a religious awe, and banishes presumption and carelessness and vainglory.

3. Between an unmanly contempt and disregard of ourselves, with an abject fear and blind reverence of others, which is one extreme, and a conceited, overbearing insolence, which is the other extreme, true humility proceeds, always uniform and decent. The humble person never assumes what belongs not to him; he desires to possess no more power, and to receive no more respect from others than is suitable to his own character and condition, and appointed by the customs of society. He is not a rigid exacter of the things to which he has an undoubted right; he can overlook many faults; he is not greatly provoked at those slights which put vain persons out of all patience.

II. The motives to the practice of it.

1. Humility is a virtue so excellent that the Scriptures have in some sort ascribed it even to God Himself. Humility consists principally in a due sense of our defects, our transgressions, our wants, and the obligations which we have received. Therefore such humility cannot be in God, who possesses all perfections. But there is a part of humility, as it relates to oar behaviour towards men, called condescension; and this is sometimes represented in Scripture as a disposition not unworthy of the Divine nature.

2. The example of our Saviour is an example of every virtue, particularly of humility.

3. In the behaviour of the angels, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, we find that part of humility called condescension, or a cheerful submission to any offices by which the good of others may be promoted. Hence we learn to think it no disgrace to be, as our Lord says He was, the servant of all. In truth, we cannot be more creditably employed.

4. It is affirmed in many places of Scripture, that humility secures to us the favour of God, and will bring down His blessing upon ourselves and our undertakings.

5. Humility usually gains the esteem and love of men, and consequently the conveniences, at least, the necessaries of life. Since all love themselves, they will probably favour those who never provoke, insult, deride, or injure them, who show them civility, and do them good offices. The humble person, therefore, takes the surest way to recommend himself to those with whom he is joined in society, to increase the number of his well-wishers and friends, and to escape or defeat the assaults of detraction, envy, and malice.

6. The most certain present recompense of humility is that which arises from its own nature, and with which it repays the mind that entertains it; and a very valuable recompense it would be, though it were the only one allotted to this virtue. A humble person neither hates nor envies anyone; therefore he is free from those very turbulent vices which are always a punishment in themselves. He is not discomposed by the slights or censures of others. If he has undesignedly given some occasion for them, he amends the fault; if he deserves them not, he regards them as little. He is contented with his condition, if it be tolerable; and, therefore, he finds satisfaction in all that is good, and overlooks, and in some measure escapes, all that is inconvenient in it. He has a due sense of his unworthiness and defects; by which he is taught to bear calamities with patience and submission, and thereby to soften their harsh nature, and to allay their violence.

7. Lastly: from the account which we have given of humility, we may draw this conclusion, that it is not, as the haughty are inclined to imagine, an unmanly and sordid disposition. It is indeed a virtue so remote from meanness of spirit, that it is no bad sign of a great and exalted mind. On the contrary, if we would know what meanness of spirit is, and how it acts, let us look for it amongst the proud and insolent, and we shall not lose our labour. (J. Jortin, D. D.)

Christian humility

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I. Wherein consists the grace of Christian humility.

1. Humility is directly opposed to pride. As pride consists in having high thoughts of oneself, so humility consists in having low apprehensions of ourselves. Pride is the child of ignorance, humility the offspring of knowledge. They are not opposite errors, between which truth and goodness lie, but the former is a vice, the latter is a virtue; the one is the feeling generated by the belief of a lie, the other is the temper of mind produced by the reception of the truth. Humility may be considered in a twofold point of view, as it respects God and as it respects our fellow creatures, but in these different aspects it is not two virtues, but the same correct estimate of our character and condition influencing our conduct towards God and man. Humility consists in a due sense of our dependence. Pride can only exist in a fancied state of independence; a feeling of obligation wounds; that of constant dependence mortifies pride. Yet man is entirely a dependent being. We derive everything from God: “In Him we live and move, and have our being.” If we are humble, it will be a pleasing thought to us, that God has unlimited control over us, that we owe everything to Him, and that He has an indisputable right to order our affairs according to the good pleasure of His will. In the discharge of duty, in prosperity and adversity, in circumstances of perplexity, or in all our plans for the future, we shall not lean to our own understanding, nor rely upon our own strength, but rather trust in the Lord with our whole hearts, we shall acknowledge Him in all our ways, and look up to Him for the direction of our steps. But we are not only dependent on God, we are so in a subordinate sense on our fellow creatures. While society is formed of different ranks and orders, there is an intimate union between them, and a constant dependence of the parts on each other. The higher cannot do without the lower ranks, and the latter are almost equally dependent on the former.

2. Humility consists of a proper estimate of our relative importance. As it respects God we are as nothing before Him; He is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity; from everlasting to everlasting He is God; boundless in might, infinite in all His perfections. Humility towards men will consist very much in a due estimate of our relative importance, not only to each other, but in the view of the Divine Being. Whatever nominal distinctions are recognised in the world, humility will feel that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the earth. What are the mole hills of distinction, the little elevations of human society, when we contemplate it in the mass? or what are they in the estimation of God, who is no respecter of persons? Humility will not put an extravagant value on the distinctions of earth; it will be kind and courteous to all, and in all the suffering and misery it may be called to contemplate in others, it will feel the irresistible force of the appeal, Am I not a man and a brother? It will be ready to render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

3. Humility will also consist in a low estimate of our knowledge. “Be not wise,” says the apostle, “in your own conceit.” In all the distinctions of society there are none in which vanity and self-conceit are so cherished as in that of human literature. Now humility will moderate our estimate of what we know; it will teach us that literary distinction arises far more from adventitious circumstances, over which we have no control, than from any native superiority of mind; and that many of those whom the providence of God has precluded from the cultivation of their minds would, with equal advantages as ourselves possessed, have far outstripped us in the acquisition of knowledge. Humility will cherish a conviction of the imperfection of our faculties. It will feel on every side the bounds of human knowledge: the voice of God saying, “So far shalt thou go and no farther.”

4. Humility consists in a correct estimate of our moral condition.

(1) We are not only subjects of the Divine government, but we are guilty creatures, under the condemnation of the law of God. Whatever the pride of man may suggest, “we are all gone out of the way, we are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Humility rightly estimates this moral desolation. It thus prepares the mind for the revelation of God’s mercy, to welcome the glad tidings of a Saviour, and to submit to the Divine method of forgiving sins. And if through grace we are brought to depend on Christ for salvation, humility will characterise every subsequent estimate of ourselves.

(2) A proper estimate of our moral condition will express itself appropriately towards our fellow men.

II. We must enforce the cultivation of humility upon you by various considerations.

1. It is in its own nature necessary to a reception of Christianity.

2. Humility is also an essential part of religion. Our hearts cannot be right with God until we apprehend His majesty and our own meanness-until we realise our entire dependence on Him-until, with humble and imploring faith, we are looking to the Saviour for salvation, and disposed to say, “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” Humility is equally necessary to our perseverance in the Divine life: the dependence on God it generates is the vitality of our religion; the self-diffidence it creates is our best security.

3. God has put peculiar honour on humbleness of mind, while He has expressed His detestation of the opposite spirit. “Every one proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” “A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.” But, on the contrary, He everywhere commends an humble spirit; it is the disposition of mind He delights to favour. “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly.”

4. This virtue is enforced by the conduct of our Lord.

5. Humility is an undying grace; it will flourish more perfectly in heaven. All the saints and angels are clothed in this appropriate garb of a creature. Let us, then, cultivate a quality of character which will abide with us through eternity, which will constitute a portion of the bliss of heaven; it will enlarge our happiness on earth, and eminently meeten us for future glory. (S. Summers.)

Humility

The word itself and its history are interesting. “There are cases,” says Coleridge, “in which more knowledge, of more value, may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign.” Now take this word humility. It was not a new word when the New Testament was written. It had been used for years. Only it is striking that almost without exception the word humility, used before the time of Christ, is used contemptuously and rebukingly. It always meant meanness of spirit. To be humble was to be a coward. Where could we find a more striking instance of the change that the Christian religion brought into the world, than in the way in which it took this disgraceful word and made it honourable? To be humble is to have a low estimation of one’s self. That was considered shameful in the olden time. Christ came and made the despised quality the crowning grace of the culture that He inaugurated. Lo! the disgraceful word became the key word of His fullest gospel. He redeemed the quality, and straightway the name became honourable. Think what the change must have been. Think with what indignation and contempt men of the old school in Rome and Athens must have seen mean spiritedness, as they called it, taken up, inculcated and honoured, proclaimed as the salvation of the world, and Him in whom it was most signally embodied made the Saviour and King of men. Ah, it seems to me more and more that it must have been very hard for those early disciples to have believed in Christ. But let us see, if we can, what the change was that Christianity accomplished, and how it came about. The quality that Christianity rescued and glorified was humility. Humility means a low estimate or value of one’s self. But all values are relative. The estimate we set on anything depends of course on the standard with which we compare it.

1. Now Christianity’s great primary revelation was God. Much about Him it showed men, but first of all it showed them Him. He, the Creator, the Governor, became a presence clear and plain before men’s hearts. His greatness, His holiness, His love-nay, we cannot describe Him by His qualities, for He is greater than them all-He, by the marvellous method of the Incarnation, showed Himself to man. He stood beside man’s work. He towered above, and folded Himself about man’s life. He entered into men’s closets and took possession of men’s hearts. And what then? God in the world must be the standard of the world. Greatness meant something different when men had seen how great He was; and the manhood which had compared itself with lesser men and grown proud, now had a chance to match itself with God, and to see how small it was, and to grow humble about itself. Just imagine that when you and I were going on learning our lessons, doing our work, exercising our skill here on the earth, and proud of our knowledge, our strength, and our skill-just suppose that suddenly Omniscience towered up above our knowledge, and Omnipotence above our strength, and the Infinite Wisdom stood piercing out of the sight of our ignorant and baffled skill. Must it not crush the man with an utter insignificance? What is the use of heaving up these mole hills so laboriously close by the gigantic mountainside? But if the revelation is not only this; if it includes not only the greatness but the love of God; if the majesty that is shown to us is the majesty of a father, which takes our littleness into his greatness, makes it part of itself, honours it, trains it, does not mock it, then there comes the true graciousness of humility. It is not less humble, but it is not crushed. It is not paralysed, but stimulated. The energy which the man used to get out of his estimate of his own greatness he gets now out of the sight of his father’s, which yet is so near to him that, in some finer and higher sense, it still is his; and so he is more hopeful and happy and eager in his humility than he ever used to be in his pride. This is the philosophy of reverence and humility as enrichers of life and mainsprings of activity.

2. This is one, then, of the ways in which Christ rescued and exalted humility. He gave man his true standard. He set man’s littleness against the infinite height of God. The next way that I want to speak of is even more remarkable. He asserted and magnified the essential glory of humanity. He showed us that the human might be joined with the Divine. Thus He glorified human nature. Ah, if a man must be humbled, and is exalted by his humility, when he sees God, surely when he sees the possibility of himself, there is no truer or more exalted feeling for him than to look in on what he is, and think it very mean and wretched by the side of what he might be, what his Lord has shown him that he was made for. Christ makes us humble by showing us our design. There is nothing more strange, and at the same time more truthful, about Christianity than its combination of humiliation and exaltation for the soul of man. If one wants to prove that man is but a little lower than the angels, the son and heir of God, he must go to the Bible. If he wants to prove how poor and base and Satan-like the soul of man can be, still to the Bible he must go. If you want to find the highest ecstasy that man’s spirit ever reached, it is the Christian saint exulting in his God. Do you want to hear the bitterest sorrow that ever wrung this human heart? It is that same Christian saint penitent for his sin. I think we cannot but see the beauty of a humility like this if it once becomes the ruling power of a changed man’s life, this humility born of the sight of a man’s possible self. It has in it all that is good in the best self-respect. Nay, with reference to the whole subject of self-respect this seems to be true, that the only salvation from an admiration of our own present condition, which is pride, is to be found in a profound respect for the best possibility and plan of our being, which involves humility. So it is the sight of what God meant us to be that makes us ashamed of what we are. And it is the death of Christ for us, the preciousness that He saw in our souls making them worthy of that awful sacrifice, it is that which lets us see our own soul as He sees it in its possibility, and so lets us see it in its reality as He sees it too, and put our pride away and be humble. (Bp. Phillips Brooks.)

Clothed with humility

The image of the “clothing”-a word which is used only in this place in the Bible-is thought to have reference to a particular kind of white vestment which used to be worn by slaves. And it was made very long and large, that it might cover not only all the other dress, but the whole figure; and so it may be considered that the believer, remembering well that he is the follower of Him who “came not to be ministered unto but to minister,” should place all he has and all he is under the folds of a mantling “humility,” and array himself in a servile robe. But let me caution you not to think that “the clothing of humility” has anything to do with that robe of which the Bible speaks as “the wedding garment.” It has nothing to do with it, except that God invariably makes this the lining for that. That is something from without a man; this is from within. That is saving; this is evidential. Now I am persuaded that the first way to grow humble is to be sure that you are loved. The education of almost any child will teach you that if you treat that child harshly, you will make his little heart stubborn and proud; but if he feels that you love him, he will gradually take a gentler tone. So it is with the education through which we are all passing to the life to come. The first thing God does with His child is to make the child feel that He loves him. There is nothing which will stoop a man into the dust like the gentle pressure of the feeling “I am loved.” The forgiven David, the woman at Jesus’s feet, Peter under the look, John in the bosom. Let me advise you further. If you desire to cultivate that posture of mind, accustom yourself, force yourself to do acts of humiliation-whatever is most against your natural taste. There is a still deeper feeling without which you will never have on that “robe of humility”-you must often sit and receive the droppings of the Holy Ghost. You must meditate with open eye on the meek, humble face of Jesus. You must be in union with Christ. There is a false “humility” than which none can be more destructive to the character. It is of three kinds. There is “humility” of external things-in a mortification of the body. But it is a cloak, not a robe-a look, a posture, a ceremony. There is another counterfeit which Satan makes and calls “humility.” It is what St. Paul calls in his Epistle to the Colossians a “voluntary humility”-people thinking themselves unworthy to come to God. And there are those who do not know it, but who, like Peter, are under an appearance of “humility,” indulging contemptuous pride. “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” “I am not good enough to be saved. I am not worthy to come to the Lord’s Supper. I cannot believe God loves me.” (J. Vaughan, M. A.)

Humility explained and enforced

Humility is that Christian virtue without which no other can exist, and by which every other is beautified, for, whilst the flowers of all the Christian graces grow in the shade of the Redeemer’s Cross, the root of them is humility.

I. Humility becomes us as creatures. It may also be remarked that the temptation to pride, and consequently the exercise of humility, has very much to do with a comparative view of ourselves and others. It is not in the superiority which we possess over the inferior creatures that we are apt either to exaggerate the difference or to forget that it is from God, but it is in the little advantage which one man may happen to possess above another, whether in mental endowments, bodily powers, or worldly wealth. It is this minor distinction, the comparative difference between man and man, which excites envy in one party and creates haughtiness in another. But the judgment of humility is according to truth. This is the spirit of humility which, like the flower blooming in the valley, delights the eye of the contemplative, who, forgetting the gaudier plants of the garden, finds nothing to charm him so much as the simple beauties of nature.

II. Humility becomes us as sinners.

III. Humility becomes us as disciples of Christ.

1. They must retain a humbling remembrance of past sins. Those sins, though forgiven by Jehovah, must not be forgotten by them, that they may see what they are in themselves, and understand how much they owe to redeeming love.

2. The Christian must also continually watch the state of his heart.

3. Whatever measures of holiness the Christian attains to, he must always remember that by the grace of God he is what he is. Thus all boasting is excluded, for he has nothing but what he has received.

4. There will always, whilst we are on the earth, remain much to be done, much to be attained. Every grace will be defective in measure and mixed with infirmity. The most faultless disciple will here find cause for humiliation. Conclusion:

1. What a delightful character is the man of distinguished humility. He may not have the glory in which the patriot, the hero, or the martyr is enshrined, but he is adorned with the beauties of holiness; he carries about with him the majesty of goodness, if not the dominion of greatness.

2. Learn from this subject to beware of false humility. True humility is diffident and retiring; it is not like the scentless flower, which turns its face to the sun throughout his course, as if for the purpose of being seen, but it is rather like the modest violet, which hides itself in obscurity, and sends forth fragrance from its deep retirement. It employs no herald, it unfolds no banner, it blows no trumpet, but, whilst conferring substantial benefits, it desires to be like the angels, who, while ministering to the heirs of salvation, are unseen and unknown by the objects of their attention.

3. Learn also, while you avoid false humility, to labour for that which is real. Let the young labour for this. Christian humility will teach you the most willing obedience, the most genuine affection, the most respectful demeanour towards your parents, and it will excite you to the most anxious endeavours for the promotion of their happiness. Let not the old neglect this spirit of humility. Do not aggravate the sorrows of your evil days by pride, by peevishness, or by discontent. When almost every leaf is gone from the rose of life, let not its thorns remain. Let parents manifest much of this temper in the treatment of their children. Always endeavour to persuade before you attempt to compel. This is the way to grow in grace, for “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” (T. Gibson, M. A.)

Christian humility

In looking into the nature of humility, we discover that it does not involve meanness or servility. It is not pusillanimity. It contains no element that degrades human nature. It is not the quality of a slave, but of kings and priests unto God. It is a necessary trait in all finite character, and therefore it is perfectly consistent with an inviolable dignity and self-respect.

I. In the first place, humility is becoming to man, because he is a creature. Shall a being who was originated from nonentity by almighty power, and who can be reduced again to nonentity by that same power, swell with haughtiness?

II. In the second place, humility is becoming to man, because he is A dependent being.

1. All his springs are in God. He is dependent for life, health, and all temporal things. He is dependent, above all, for spiritual life and health and all the blessed things of eternity.

2. Man is dependent not only upon his Creator, but also upon his fellow creature.

III. In the third place, man should be humble because he is a sinful being. Considering the peculiar attitude in which guilty man stands before God, self-abasement ought to be the main feeling in his heart, for, in addition to the infinite difference there is originally between himself and his Maker, he has rendered himself yet more different by apostasy. The first was only a difference in respect to essence, but the last is a difference in respect to character. How strange it is that he should forget this difference, and, entering into a comparison of himself with his fellow men, should plume himself upon a supposed superiority. The culprits are disputing which shall be the greatest at the very instant when their sentence of condemnation is issuing from the lips of their Judge! There is still another consideration under this head which strengthens the motive for humility. We have seen that the fact of sin furnishes an additional reason for self-abasement because it increases the distance between man and God; it has also made him still more dependent upon God. Nothing but pure and mere mercy can deliver him. But nothing interferes with the exercise of mercy like pride in the criminal. A proud man cannot be forgiven. It involves a self-contradiction. If there be self-asserting haughtiness in the heart, God can neither bestow grace nor man receive it.

IV. A fourth and most powerful reason why man should be clothed with humility is found in the vicarious suffering and atonement of Christ in His behalf. Feeling himself to be a condemned sinner, and beholding the Lamb of God “made a curse for him” and bearing His sins in His own body on the tree, all self-confidence and self-righteousness will die out of his soul. (G. T. Shedd, D. D.)

Humility with the fruits of it

I. To explain the nature of humility. Humility consists in a low opinion or esteem. Now the opinion which we form of ourselves is either absolute or comparative, and whichever way we judge it is very certain that a low opinion best becomes us, and is most suitable to our nature and state.

1. First, if we judge of ourselves absolutely, without comparing ourselves with any others, humility and truth too requires that our opinion should be very moderate and low. We know but little, and we live, alas! to little good purpose. What a mixture of corruption is there with every grace, and what a sully of sin in every duty! Again, as to the happiness of our state, what mortal does not feel that he is miserable? Pains and diseases afflict our bodies, crosses and disappointments perplex our circumstances, the gloom of melancholy gathers about the heart, and sorrows overspread the whole world.

2. Humility consisteth in having a low opinion of ourselves as compared with others, whether with God or with our fellow creatures.

II. To set before you the good fruits of humility. To this grace we may apply these words of the prophet, “It taketh root downward and beareth fruit upward” (Isa\_37:31), and the deeper the root is laid, the larger and fairer will the fruit be.

1. Meekness is one pleasant fruit which grows upon humility, and to this we may join the kindred grace of peaceableness or quietness of spirit (1Pe\_3:4).

2. Patience is another good fruit of humility, with which we may join the kindred grace of submission. Now patience has respect either to God or man.

(1) Patience in respect to God consisteth in a quiet submission to His afflictive providences without murmuring.

(2) If we further consider patience as it respects men, as it is opposite to fretfulness at their faults and follies, this also is the fruit of humility; for if we were as sensible of our own follies as we should be, we should more patiently bear with the faults and follies of others.

3. Self-denial is another good fruit of humility, and how necessary a duty that is you will learn from those words of Christ (Luk\_9:23). We surely esteem the body at too high a rate when we pamper it to the hurt of the soul.

4. The last good fruit of humility which I shall here speak of is contentment. The humble man remembers that, be his worldly condition what it will, it is unspeakably better than he deserves.

III. To urge upon you the exhortation in our text by a few motives. “Be ye clothed with humility.” For-

1. Consider how high an approbation God has expressed of this grace, and how hateful pride is to Him.

2. Consider what a lovely and engaging example of humility Christ hath set us.

3. Let me recommend humility as a necessary part of your preparation for heaven. (D. Jennings.)

Humility and its greatness

I. Let us examine the source and ground of humility. This is drawn from the knowledge of God and from the relation in which we stand to Him. Hence, where the knowledge of God is absent, the exercise of humility becomes impossible. Humility begins with the knowledge of God, and advances to the knowledge of ourselves. Thus we see at our first step that it consists of something we gain, not of aught we lose. The humble man is rich in his humility, for he has gained that which the proud man has not. Pride is the instinct of ignorance. But we must take another step, and ask how it is that the knowledge of God, instead of puffing a man up with the conceit of an acquisition, only produces humility and the most prostrate lowliness of mind. It might be answered, because the knowledge itself is but a gift freely bestowed; it is a revelation, not a discovery, and therefore implies in itself the obligation of a receiver towards a donor. This is true, but a more complete reply is, that humility is produced by the impressiveness of the majesty and greatness of the Divine Being as revealed to us in His matchless perfections and infinite glory. This knowledge of the glory of God is not a work of nature but a gift of grace. This new knowledge becomes a test whereby we measure ourselves. We cannot help this self-application, since, in knowing God, we have gained a new idea altogether. And it is in the immense difference between what God is and what we are that Christian humility originates and grows. Then, when we read the inspired history of man, lowliness is increased. For there we are told not alone of the immortal spirit breathed into man, but of the Divine likeness in which we were first created, even in the image and similitude of God. And now, standing amid these wonders of revelation, with the wretched experience of ourselves as we are fresh and full upon us, there is not a truth which does not deepen our awe by the very wonderfulness of the realities to which we find ourselves related, and with which we stand in daily contact. For here is the wonder, that true humility grows out of self-respect. No man living has so high a conception of the dignity of human nature as the Christian.

II. From the source and nature of Christian humility let us consider its practical outgoing. Here, again, we must take the side turned towards God first; otherwise we shall be out of order. What are the characteristic feelings and what the corresponding acts which a profound humility produces in our intercourse with God? In the first place, it produces an absorbing and unmeasured admiration. In speaking of so great a being as God, adoration may perhaps be the better word, so long as it is understood to be the adoration not of fear but of love-the adoration of desire, of grateful affection, and of fervent praise. And then, out of adoring praise to the redeeming God by whom we live, arises simple trusting faith in Him. From praise and trust combined there will arise also implicit obedience. For admiration and trust exalt to the highest degree the glory of the Being admired and trusted. Then how can God be wrong in any way? and if right, then every word of His must be kept as a seal of our acceptance. And now we shall see how these three sentiments of adoration, trust, and obedience necessarily affect our relation towards our fellow men. Gentle manners, gentle looks, gentle words ever considerate of other men’s feelings, make the true Christian a natural gentleman, and invest him with an intuitive politeness which is but the outgoing of the Divine life within. (E. Garbett, M. A.)

Be clothed with humility

I. Let us be clothed with humility before God. God delights in it; it is the “ornament which in His sight is of great price.” A lady applied to a celebrated philanthropist on behalf of an orphan child. When he had bidden her draw on him for any amount, she said, “As soon as the child is old enough I will teach him to thank you.” “Stop (said the good man), you are mistaken; we do not thank the clouds for rain-teach the child to look higher and thank Him who gives both the clouds and the rain.” That was being clothed with humility before God.

II. Let us be clothed with humility before the world-the proud and gainsaying world. This is the way in which we are to be lights to it add salt in it. Humility does more than argument. If it irritates, it impresses and convinces. An aged patriarch was tauntingly asked by a boastful young Pharisee, “Do you suppose that you have any real religion?” “None to speak of,” was the dignified answer, and it went sharp as a javelin into that young Pharisee’s bosom.

III. Let us be clothed with humility before each other. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another.” This is hardest of any-this wants more humility than either of the preceding. Mr. Newton’s favourite expression to his friends was, “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be, but by the grace of God I am not what I once was.” (James Bolton.)

The garment of humility

No garment sits so well on human nature, and no ornament so gracefully conceals its deformity, as humility. Yet there is no dress which we find it more difficult to assume. There is something in our imperfect and unsanctified nature which revolts at the very idea of submission, condescension, and inferiority.

I. What is meant by being clothed with humility. To cultivate this grace we need only contemplate ourselves as we really are, examine out’ true condition, look at our selves in the mirror of truth and righteousness, and we shall come away humbled to the dust.

II. Some advantages to be secured by being humble. God’s commandments have nothing arbitrary about them. Whatever He ordains is for our good.

1. Humility is the great qualification for the reception of knowledge and for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. A proud man will neither learn anything from his neighbour nor receive anything from his God. If a man thinks he knows enough already upon any given subject, he is not likely to learn much more. Humility opens the pathway to all knowledge. By it our minds become docile so that they are prepared to receive every new form of truth. And if we cherish this spirit, may we not learn from all around us? Humility also prepares for the reception of the Divine kingdom into the heart.

2. Humility is essential to the growth of the soul in holiness and grace. All true spiritual progress is the work of God. If he do not yield to the power and grace of God, how can He fashion him after His own will? Humility, then, prepares us to feel our inability to do any good thing of ourselves, and to look for all in God. Humility opens the pathway to honour and glory (Isa\_57:15).

4. Humility is associated with the purest happiness. Humility in man helps him to maintain a serenity and calmness amidst all the storms of life. (Harvey Phillips, B. A.)

Two kinds of clothing

A new suit of clothes! That’s a subject in which you all take an interest. When a boy enters the army or navy he puts on a new suit of clothes, blue or red, and that reminds him that he is bound to serve his queen and country, and that he must not disgrace his uniform. I am going to speak to you today about some different kinds of clothing, some good, others bad. First of all, let us think of the clothes which God makes for His beautiful world. He clothes the grass of the field. Every tree has a different shaped dress and a different shade of colour. Even in the winter, when the trees look so bare and cold, they are still clothed by God. Trees have two sets of leaves, one set for the summer, the other for the winter. And God clothes the beasts and birds and gives each exactly the sort of dress which he re quires. You have all seen the mole hills in a field, and sometimes you have caught a glimpse of the mole himself. Well, God has clothed him in a dress like black velvet, which is just fitted for his home underground. The animals which live in cold regions have a warm clothing of fur, and those which live among snow and ice are white, so that their enemies may not easily see them. Now let us think about ourselves. In the Bible we hear of two kinds of clothing, the best and the worst. St. Peter says, “Be clothed with humility”; that’s the best clothing. In the hundred and ninth Psalm we are told of a wicked man who “clothed himself with cursing as with a garment”; that’s the worst clothing. Now I have noticed that very often when children are growing up into big lads and girls, there is a great change in their manners. Did you ever hear the old fable of the donkey who found a lion’s skin? The donkey covered himself with the skin, and tried to play the lion and frighten the people. But some of them spied his long ears, and recognised his well-known voice, and he was soon stripped of his lion’s skin and driven away. Now, my boys, if you are tempted to put on a suit of clothes which does not become you, if while still boys you put on the habits of a man, and of a bad man into the bargain, remember the fable of the ass in the lion’s skin. But when a child has outgrown the good clothing of humility and put on a full suit of pride, there comes another evil from it. He often gives up his prayers and his Bible. I told you that the Bible speaks of the worst kind of clothing; it tells us of a man who “clothed himself with cursing as with a garment.” I take cursing there to mean all sorts of bad language. The old Greeks tell us a story about the death of Hercules. That strong hero had shot his enemy, Nessus, with a poisoned arrow, and the garment of the slain man was all stained with poisoned blood. Before he died Nessus gave his clothing to the wife of Hercules, telling her that it would make her husband love her always. It came to pass after a time that she gave the fatal garment to her husband, and no sooner had he put it on than the poison seized upon him, and when, in his agony, he tried to put off the clothing, it clung all the tighter, and so he died, killed by his own poison. So it is with the man who clothes himself with a garment of cursing or bad talk; it clings to him and poisons him, body and soul. There are several other kinds of clothing of which I might warn you. One of these is self-righteousness. I have seen a man with a very glossy black suit of clothes, very carefully buttoned up, and at first sight he looked most clean and respectable. But when I came to look more closely, I found that his linen was anything but white and clean. His respectability was all outside. If your clothes are old and worn out or do not fit you, what must you do? You must get a new suit. Well, there are some kinds of clothing which we should cast off as soon as possible. If any of you have put on bad habits, filthy clothing, such as pride, or falsehood, or bad talk, you must change your clothes. Cast off the old garment, and go down on your knees, and ask God for Jesus Christ’s sake to give you a new dress. (H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M. A.)

Work tends to humility

I cannot but think that one of the truest ways in which Christianity has made humility at once a commoner and a nobler grace has been in the way in which it has furnished work for the higher powers of man, which used to be idle, and only ponder proudly on themselves. Idleness standing in the midst of unattempted tasks is always proud. Work is always tending to humility. Work touches the keys of endless activity, opens the infinite, and stands awe struck before the immensity of what there is to do. Work brings a man into the great realm of facts. Work takes the dreamy youth who is growing proud in his closet over one or two sprouting powers which he has discovered in himself, and sets him out among the gigantic needs and the vast processes of the world, and makes him feel his littleness. Work opens the measureless fields of knowledge and skill that reach far out of our sight. Is not this what you would do for a boy whom you saw getting proud-set him to work? He might be of so poor stuff that he would be proud of his work, poorly as he would do it. But if he were really great enough to be humble at all, his work would bring him to humility. He would be brought face to face with facts. He would measure himself against the eternal pillars of the universe. He would learn the blessed lesson of his own littleness in the way in which it is always learned most blessedly, by learning the largeness of larger things. And all this, which the ordinary occupations of life do for our ordinary powers, Christianity, with the work that it furnishes for our affections and our hopes, does for the higher parts of us. (Bp. Phillips Brooks.)

Humility

There are some sins which have resisted every influence but that of Christianity, and over which even the gospel itself seems to obtain a precarious triumph. One of these is pride. To be proud is not only to be what Christianity condemns, but something essentially inconsistent with the first principles of its teaching, and with the special type of character which it seeks to create. Heathenism showed it no such antipathy. Unless it made itself specially ridiculous by trading on obviously false pretences, it was considered a becoming and reasonable tiring. It is not difficult to understand how this should have been so. Pride, to be seen in its objectionable light, must be seen in connection with those truths about God and human nature which Christianity first made known to the world. It is only when it stands in their company it appears as Scripture represents it. How Christianity dethrones this idol of self we know very well. It reminds us that the great thing is not what a man has, but what he is. It reveals in the Person of Christ the true standard of moral excellence. Pride has to come down from its pedestal and take its place in the dust. We see we are not only wrong, but responsible for being wrong. We have been following false ideals. It seems almost impossible to conceive how a proud man can ever have been truly convicted of sin, or brought to receive the salvation of Christ as a free, unmerited gift. It seems more difficult still to believe that such an one is living by the faith of the Son of God, receiving as a sinner daily forgiveness, and as having nothing being indebted to Him for all things. It is hardly to be wondered at that the world should be sceptical of our Christian profession when it sees so much that directly contradicts it. Are we disposed to retract the confession which we made so sincerely when we cried for mercy, that of all sinners we are the chief? Or, are we forgetting what the world really is, as we saw it once in the light of the Cross, when its glory faded till it vanished away, and we cried, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”? Is it assuming its old importance? “Be clothed,” says St. Peter, “with humility.” And as we read the words we feel how little of this clothing we have been accustomed to wear, how faintly we have realised the nature of the habit in which we should always be found apparelled. The word which the apostle uses here, and which is translated, “Be clothed,” is interesting and somewhat rare. It means literally “to tie or gird on,” and is so rendered in the Revised Version, but apparently it also refers to the peculiar garment that was worn by slaves, and which was the usual mark or badge of their condition.

I. First, St. Peter says, see that your humility is fastened to you as it were so securely nothing shall be able to deprive you of it. He recognises the risk of it being plucked off or laid aside. And among those to whom he wrote the risk was doubtless considerable. In so mixed a community as the Christian Church at that time it would be difficult to subordinate all selfish desires to the common good. And persecution, which was then active, might easily awaken a feeling of resentment or disdain. To be reviled and yet revile not again, to suffer wrong and take it patiently, is never an easy thing. In our ease the danger may spring from a different quarter, but it is no less real. Perhaps we feel our humility to be nothing but a cloak, something put on or assumed which is not natural to us, and in which we pose in a somewhat hypocritical guise. And, of course, a humility which is conscious of itself is no humility at all. It is the most odious of all possible counterfeits. But the girdle or overall of the slave to which St. Peter alludes was his natural dress. It simply indicated his servile condition. There was no inconsistency between the two. And, as we have seen, humility is the natural garb of the Christian, expressing his dependence on Jesus Christ, whose slave he is. Yet the temptation frequently comes to lay it aside, or to give way to a temper which makes it impossible to wear it. It is true, we argue to ourselves, we have much to keep us humble, but not more than these others, or perhaps so much, if they only knew it. Why, then, should we yield to them, or submit tamely to their assumptions? If we give them an inch, they will take an ell, and there is no end to the liberties some may allow themselves, or the length to which they may presume. All this is very natural, but is it Christian? Is it not renouncing the vesture of humility, and finding plausible excuses for the pride that is so ready to assert itself? There are interests that ought to be dearer to us than any personal considerations. Let us be clothed with humility. Let us keep it on firmly. Let our whole life in all its details be ruled by the remembrance that we are not our own, but Christ’s slaves, and bound to act in accordance with our condition.

II. But, secondly, being clothed with humility means that, being girt with this vesture of servitude, we are always to be ready for service. There are some clothes in which a man cannot work. He puts them on for state occasions. So there are some Christians who always seem, so to speak, to be in dress clothes. They would be quite shocked if you asked them to do something that involved even a little hard work. They are much too dainty and refined for that. Or, they strike you as being available only on great occasions. Are we so clothed with humility as to remember that it is not ours to pick and choose, but to be ready at the Master’s call? Do we remember that no act of service is too humble or obscure for us; that we are not to think there are some things for which we are too good, and which we are therefore justified in leaving undone? Whenever we do this, we discard our girdle or cloak of humility. We forget what manner of men we are and the character we wear.

III. Again, St. Peter reminds us that humility is not only indispensable to our serving Christ, but also to our serving one another. The correct text of the passage literally rendered runs thus: “Gird yourselves with humility for the sake of one another.” And truly no better specific could be devised for developing the happiness and strength of a community. For a great part of the misery and confusion of the world pride is responsible. It makes joint effort impracticable, and is the creator of constant discord and misunderstanding. Pride is an insoluble particle. It resists fusion and protests against amalgamation. Humility presents no such obstacle. It facilitates union. It is mutual concession, “in honour preferring one another.” “Be clothed,” therefore, “with humility,” writes the apostle, and as the precept is so confessedly difficult to obey, it may be well to suggest one or two directions.

1. Let us get out of the way of making ourselves the centre of everything. If we are Christians, self has been dethroned, and it must be forbidden all acts of usurpation. We have found a larger and nobler centre for life, and other interests that are greater and more commanding than our own. Let us put these first-the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let us remember that these are the interests that endure.

2. A second suggestion I may offer is, that we should think most of all of Christ, and of pleasing Him. When He receives the proper place in our lives everything else will surely come right. It is only when He is forgotten, or His presence is faintly and fitfully realised, other things assume a disproportionate importance. We lose our standard of value, our justness of perception, and our whole perspective becomes confused. (C. Moinet, M. A.)

The shadow shortens

Opinion of ourselves is like the casting of a shadow, which is always largest when the sun is at the greatest distance. By the degrees that the sun approaches, the shadow shortens, and under the direct meridian light it becomes none at all. It is so with our opinion of ourselves; while the good influences of God are at the greatest distance from us, it is then always that we conceive best of ourselves; as God approaches the conceit lessens, till we receive the fuller measure of His grace, and then we become nothing in our own conceit, and God appears to be all in all. (Dean Young.)

Humility a beautiful dress

An Irish preacher named Thady Conellan, who greatly assisted Dr. Monck Mason in his labours connected with the revision of the Hibernian Bible Society’s Irish Bible, was eminent not only as an orator, a wit, and a humble unostentatious Christian, but was unmoved by the splendour and gaiety which surrounded him, and retained his simplicity amid it all. A magnificent duchess having one day asked him, “Pray, do you know Lady Lorton?” was quickly answered, “Yes, madam, I do; and she is the best dressed lady in Ireland.” “How very odd! Best dressed lady in Ireland.” What a strange man! “Pray, how is she dressed?” But her grace’s surprise was converted to satisfaction when Thady rejoined, “Yes, madam, Lady Lorton is the best dressed lady in Ireland, or in England either, for she is clothed in humility.”

Vanity

Vanity, or love of display, is one of the most contemptible and pernicious passions that can take possession of the human mind. Its roots are in self-ignorance-its fruits are affectation and falsehood. Vanity is a kind of mental intoxication, in which the pauper fancies himself a prince, and exhibits himself in aspects disgusting to all observers. (D. Thomas, D. D.)

Humility a preparation for heaven

“Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;

High is the roof there, but the gate is low.”

(Robert Herrick.)

Clothed with humility

Humility is the beauty of grace. “Be clothed with humility.” The Greek word imports that humility is the ribbon or string that ties together all those precious pearls, the rest of the graces. If this string break they are all scattered. (T. Brooks.)