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A Call to Humility

(Adapted from an article that appeared in "Knowing the Scriptures", Sept-Oct., 1935)

If there is anything that hinders the spiritual progress of the child of God, surely it is the attitude of superiority — the spirit of pride.

One does not need to be a diligent searcher of the Scriptures to discover how frequently and strongly they denounce such a spirit existing in those who have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The lowly life and humiliating death of our Savior are impressively vocal against those who elevate themselves above others, in dignity and demeanor. Humility is the essence of holy living. The Christian who follows closely, by the help of God, the footsteps of the Master, is the one who will be characterized by a meek and lowly manner. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5) In the eyes of the world and in the reckonings of men, he will be somewhat ignored and of little account, but in the eyes of God and in the evaluation of Heaven, he will be great and mighty. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11) Earth applauds when Heaven is silent, and when the voice of earth's applause dies away in the distance, all Heaven bursts forth in glorious acclamation. In other words, true greatness in Heaven's estimation is not popularity or fame, but humility of heart and lowliness of mind.

One Bible student has very aptly said that there are three kinds of pride: pride of race, pride of face, and pride of grace. The first two can speak for themselves,

the third, the most dangerous and detrimental of all, will be worth some serious consideration.

Pride of grace is glorying because of what I am and can do, by the grace of God. It is vaunting myself because God has condescended, at some time or other, to use me as His instrument in His service. Surely such an alien thought as this is inconceivable. "But as for me, God forbid that I should glory in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon which the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world." (Gal. 6:14)

On studying the records of the outstanding characters in the Word of God, one is struck with the great care God took when He called men for His service. He alone had the prerogative in choosing those who would carry out His will and bring into fruition His purposes. The Divine summons came to those who were fully aware of their own weakness and inability.

Take for instance two examples from the Old

Testament which bring to the surface the dominating virtue which characterized the servants of God.

1. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush on the lonely slopes of mount Horeb and told him of His intention in sending him to Pharaoh, that he might bring forth His people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Notice the reply of Moses to the call of God. "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11) I am sure Moses would stress the personal pronoun "I". He realized at least two things: the greatness of the task, and the futility of the instrument to undertake the task.

To the reply of Moses, God gives the promise of

His presence: “Certainly I will be with thee.” (Ex. 3:12) In verse 11 we have the “I” of human weakness, and in verse 12 we have the “I” of divine strength. Surely in such words as these spoken by Moses we can discover that which characterized his life — humility.

2. Israel was passing through one of the darkest periods of its history. Deborah and Barak had delivered them triumphantly out of the hands of the Canaanites, and the land had rest forty years. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and drastic results followed. (Judg. 5:6,7) Just at the crucial moment, away yonder in Ophrah, a man named Gideon was busily engaged. God called him saying, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?” (Judg. 6:14) Gideon’s reply was along the same line as that of Moses, “Oh my Lord wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my father’s house” (Judg. 6:15).

And again the promise of the Divine presence is assured, “Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” (Judg. 6:16) In verse 15 we have the “I” of impotence. In verse 16 it is the “I” of omnipotence. Let us who seek to serve God see to it that we are not doing it, whatever “it” may be, in the energy of the flesh, and to achieve our selfish ends, our own glory. But let us serve rather in humility, drawing our supplies from the overflowing reservoir — Christ Himself.

Pride of grace? Never. Let my glorying ever be always and only in the cross, and in my Savior who died on the cross, for “He is worthy.”