

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOWLY KING.

A Sermon

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“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”—Zechariah ix. 9.

I do not intend to expound the whole text at any length, but simply to dwell upon *the lowliness of Jesus*. Yet this much I may say: whenever God would have his people especially glad, it is always in himself. If it be written, “Rejoice greatly,” then the reason is, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!” Our chief source of rejoicing is the presence of King Jesus in the midst of us. Whether it be his first or his second advent, his very shadow is delight. His footfall is music to our ear.

That delight springs much from the fact that he is ours. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: . . . behold, *thy* King cometh unto thee.” Whatever he may be to others, he is thy King, and to whomsoever he may or may not come, he cometh *unto thee*. He comes for thy deliverance, thine honour, thy consummated bliss. He keeps thy company: he makes thy house his palace, thy love his solace, thy nature his home. He who is thy King by hereditary right, by his choice of thee, by his redemption of thee, and by thy willing choice of him, is coming to thee; therefore do thou shout for joy.

The verse goes on to show why the Lord our King is such a source of gladness: “He is just, and having salvation.” He blends righteousness and mercy; justice to the ungodly, and favour to his saints. He has worked out the stern problem—how can God be just, and yet save the sinful? He is just in his own personal character, just as having borne the penalty of sin, and just as cleared from the sin which he voluntarily took upon him. Having endured the terrible ordeal, he is saved, and his people are saved in him. He is to be saluted with hosannas, which signify, “Save, Lord”; for where he comes he brings victory and consequent salvation with him. He routs the enemies of his people, breaks for them the serpent’s head, and leads their captivity captive. We admire the justice which marks his reign, and the salvation

which attends his sway ; and in both respects we cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" !

Moreover, it is written of him that he is lowly, which cannot be said of many kings and princes of the earth ; nor would they care to have it said of them. Thy King, O daughter of Jerusalem, loves to have his lowliness published by thee with exceeding joy. His outward state betokens the humility and gentleness of his character. He appears to be what he really is : he conceals nothing from his chosen. In the height of his grandeur he is not like the proud monarchs of earth. The patient ass he prefers to the noble charger ; and he is more at home with the common people than with the great. In his grandest pageant, in his capital city, he was still consistent with his meek and lowly character, for he came "riding upon an ass." He rode through Jerusalem in state ; but what lowliness marked the spectacle ! It was an extemporized procession, which owed nothing to Garter-king-at-arms, but everything to the spontaneous love of friends. An ass was brought, and its foal, and his disciples sat him thereon. Instead of courtiers in their robes, he was surrounded by common peasants and fishermen, and children of the streets of Jerusalem : the humblest of men and the youngest of the race shouted his praises. Boughs of trees and garments of friends strewed the road, instead of choice flowers and costly tapestries : it was the pomp of spontaneous love, not the stereotyped pageantry which power exacts of fear. With half an eye every one can see that this King is of another sort from common princes, and his dignity of another kind from that which tramples on the poor. According to the narrative, as well as the prophecy, there would seem to have been two beasts in the procession. I conceive that our Lord rode on the foal, for it was essential that he should mount a beast which had never been used before. God is not a sharer with men ; that which is consecrated to his peculiar service must not have been aforetime devoted to lower uses. Jesus rides a colt whereon never man sat. But why was the mother there ? Did not Jesus say of both ass and foal, "Loose them, and bring them unto me" ? This appears to me to be a token of his tenderness : he would not needlessly sever the mother from her foal. I like to see a farmer's kindness when he allows the foal to follow when the mare is ploughing or labouring ; and I admire the same thoughtfulness in our Lord. He careth for cattle, yea, even for an ass and her foal. He would not even cause a poor beast a needless pang by taking away its young ; and so in that procession the beast of the field took its part joyfully, in token of a better age in which all creatures shall be delivered from bondage, and shall share the blessings of his unsuffering reign. Our Lord herein taught his disciples to cultivate delicacy, not only towards each other, but towards the whole creation. I like to see in Christian people a reverence towards life, a tenderness towards all God's creatures. There is much of deep truth in those lines of "The Ancient Mariner" :—

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small."

Under the old law this tenderness was inculcated by those precepts which forbade the taking of the mother-bird with her young, and the

seething of a kid in its mother's milk. Why were these things forbidden? There would seem to be no harm in either of these practices, but God would have his people tender-hearted, sensitive, and delicate in their handling of all things. A Christian should have nothing of the savage about him; but everything that is considerate and kind. Our Lord rode through the streets of Jerusalem with an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; for he is lowly in heart, and gentle to all. His is no mission of crushing power, and selfish aggrandisement; he comes to bless all things that be, and to make the world once more a Paradise, wherein none shall be oppressed. Blessed Saviour, when we think of the sufferings of thy creatures, both men and beasts, we pray thee to hasten thy second advent, and begin thy gentle reign!

Now, this riding of Christ upon an ass is remarkable, if you remember that no pretender to be a prophet, or a divine messenger, has imitated it. Ask the Jew whether he expects the Messiah to ride thus through the streets of Jerusalem. He will probably answer "No." If he does not, you may ask him the further question, whether there has appeared in his nation anyone who, professing to be the Messiah, has, at any time, come to the daughter of Jerusalem "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." It is rather singular that no false Messiah has copied this lowly style of the Son of David. When Sapor, the great Persian, jested with a Jew about his Messiah riding upon an ass, he said to him, "I will send him one of my horses": to which the Rabbi replied, "You cannot send him a horse that will be good enough, for that ass is to be of a hundred colours." By that idle tradition the Rabbi showed that he had not caught the idea of the prophet at all, since he could not believe in Messiah's lowliness displayed by his riding upon a common ass. The rabbinical mind must needs make simplicity mysterious, and turn lowliness into another form of pomp. The very pith of the matter is that our Lord gave himself no grand airs, but was natural, unaffected, and free from all vain-glory. His greatest pomp went no further than riding through Jerusalem upon a colt the foal of an ass. The Mohammedan turns round with a sneer, and says to the Christian, "Your Master was the rider on an ass; our Mohammed was the rider on a camel; and the camel is by far the superior beast." Just so; and that is where the Mohammedan fails to grasp the prophetic thought: he looks for strength and honour, but Jesus triumphs by weakness and lowliness. How little real glory is to be found in the grandeur and display which princes of this world affect! There is far more true glory in condescension than in display. Our Lord's riding on an ass and its foal was meant to show us how lowly our Saviour is, and what tenderness there is in that lowliness. When he is proclaimed King in his great Father's capital, and rides in triumph through the streets, he sits upon no prancing charger, such as warriors choose for their triumphs, but he sits upon a borrowed ass, whose mother walks by its side. His poverty was seen, for of all the cattle on a thousand hills he owned not one; and yet we see his more than royal wealth, for he did but say, "The Lord hath need of them," and straightway their owner yielded them up. No forced contributions supply the revenue of this prince; but his people are willing in the day of his power. He is thy King, O Zion! Shout, to think that thou hast such a Lord! Where

the sceptre is love, and the crown is lowliness, the homage should be peculiarly bright with rejoicing. None shall groan beneath such a sway; but the people shall willingly offer themselves; they shall find their liberty in his service, their rest in obedience to him, their honour in his glory.

Now, my brethren, you may forget the hosannas of that day of Palms, for I beg you to confine your thoughts to the consideration of the lowliness of our divine Lord and Master. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee . . . lowly, and riding upon an ass."

Let us think for a few minutes upon *the displays of the lowliness* of our Lord Jesus Christ; then upon *the causes of that lowliness*; and thirdly, upon *certain lessons to be learnt from that lowliness*.

I. First, then, let us think of THE DISPLAYS OF LOWLINESS MADE BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. You do not need me to remind you how devoutly we worship him as God over all, blessed for ever. Yet while on earth he veiled his Godhead, and laid bare his lowliness. His sojourn here below was full of the truest greatness; but it was a grandeur, not of loftiness, but of lowliness; not of glory, but of humiliation. Our Lord was never more glorious in the deepest sense than in his humiliation: because of it "he shall be exalted, and extolled, and shall be very high."

First, think of the lowliness of Christ in even *undertaking the salvation of guilty men*. Man without sin, as God first made him, is certainly a noble creature. It is written, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." But, as a sinner, man is a base and dishonourable being, only worthy to be destroyed. In that character he has no claims to be regarded of God at all. If it had pleased the divine supremacy to blot this rebel race from existence, God might readily have repaired the loss by the creation of superior beings; and it was lowliness of the tenderest kind which led our Lord, who took not up angels when they fell, to take up the seed of Abraham. If it were possible for some tall archangel to espouse the cause of emmets upon their hill in yonder forest, it would be a wondrous stoop; yet it would be nothing compared with the condescension of the eternal God in bowing from his lofty throne to redeem and sanctify the sons of men. We are frail creatures at the best; born yesterday, we die to-day: we are as green leaves in the forest for a while, and then our autumn comes, we fade, and the wind carries us away. For such ephemera the Lord of glory came to this sin-shadowed globe. Were he not of a lowly mind, he had never found his delights with the sons of men, nor would he have thought upon the woes of poor and needy ones.

Herein, in the next place, he showed his lowliness—that *he actually assumed our nature*. I cannot tell that story, it is too wonderful. A free spirit voluntarily encases itself in human clay: a pure spirit willingly becomes a partaker of flesh and blood! This is marvellous lowliness. The strong is compassed with infirmity; the happy assumes capacity for suffering; the infinitely holy becomes one of a race notorious for its iniquity! This is a triumph of lowliness. The great God, the Infinite of ages, unites himself with a human body; he is born into our infancy, he grows up into our youth, he toils through our manhood; he accomplishes a life like our own! This is a miracle of lowliness. Methinks

the angels still gaze into these things, and wonder at the Word made flesh. It is particularly said of our incarnate Lord that he was "seen of angels"; and that leads us to believe that angels watched him with intense curiosity, and ever-growing interest, wondering what it all could mean, that he, who made and ruled the heavens, should be born of a woman, and made under the law. They wondered that he should eat, and drink, and sleep, and sigh, and suffer, like the creatures of his hand; and should, indeed, be such as they were! Surely they talk of it now with hushed voices and astonished hearts, and will so talk of it throughout the ages. Made lower than his angels are, his angels must feel a solemn awe at such a divine descent of love. This lowliness was such as only God could display: let us worship in the person of our Lord a condescending love as unique as the Person who exhibited it.

Furthermore, when our Lord found himself below, in the fashion of a man, he manifested his true lowliness by *carrying out to the full the part of a servant*. He had taken upon himself the form of a servant by becoming man, but it was no matter of form with him. He became actually obedient; having put on the livery of service, he executed the lowest office. Never scullion in a king's kitchen did menial work so thoroughly as he. In his great house there are vessels to honour and to dishonour, and he selected to be used for the lowest offices; he made himself of no reputation; he became a servant of servants; all they that saw him laughed him to scorn; "he was despised, and we esteemed him not." If anybody was wanted to talk with a fallen woman, he was soon seen sitting on the well; if anyone was needed to win a publican, he was speedily at the house of Zaccheus. If any man must needs be slandered as having a devil and being mad, he is ready to bear the worst reproach. He could truthfully say, "Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am"; yet he, their Master and Lord, had washed their feet, and therein proved that he was meek, and lowly of heart. Brothers, it is a wonderful thing that the Lord of all should have become the servant of all; it is so wonderful that many have lost their way in thinking of it; they have been unable to grasp the idea of Godhead combined with servitude, majesty united with obedience. Indeed, it is only by faith that we can realize that he that built all things yet became so poor a thing as Mary's Son, so sad a being as the Man of sorrows, so lowly a personage as the "despised and rejected of men." Yet so it was; and herein he showed the truth of his own statement, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He wore the yoke himself, and therefore can experimentally say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is he who breaks not the bruised reed, and quenches not the smoking flax. This is he who "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." His life was one long proof of meekness and lowliness, and in nothing did he fail: he exhorts us to conquer by the same persevering methods; for he has proved that gentleness and meekness will prevail.

Still, let me keep you thinking upon the lowliness of your Lord when I bid you remember *his life-long poverty*. He does not advise his disciples voluntarily to espouse poverty, unless it be for his sake, and then they do well. Times have been, and may be again, when believers must forsake all things for his cause; but in his day some of his disciples

ministered to him of their substance, and therefore had substance. He did not command these to renounce that substance, and become poor, though I doubt not that, when persecution came, many of them gladly did so for his sake. Not to all did he put the test, "Sell all that thou hast"; but it was needful to his own personal work that he should become poor, that his people might be made rich; and this he cheerfully endured. He was laid in a borrowed cradle in the stable wherein he was born; he dwelt in his work-life in borrowed houses, and lived upon the charity of his followers; and when he rested, it was in a borrowed bed; for though the foxes had holes, he had not where to lay his head. He preached from a borrowed boat; and when he fell asleep, and died, he was buried in a borrowed tomb, for he had no foot of land for a possession. He endured poverty as if he were to the manner born; for he was quite at home among the poor and lowly, receiving sinners and eating with them. Truly, a dignity surrounded him far more real than that which has been conceived to hedge a king; and yet in his poverty he never seemed uneasy, and the society of the poor and unlearned never grieved him. He was with the poorest as one of them; and they knew it, and therefore they loved to gather about him. He was so sweetly and tenderly their associate that the common people heard him gladly.

Remember, that he might have quitted that poverty at any moment; he that could turn water into wine, might have quaffed full many a delicious draught had he so willed; he that could multiply bread and fish needed never to have hungered. A word from him might have created palaces more wonderful than the dreams of Aladdin, and wealth greater than the abundance of Solomon, for nothing was impossible to him. If he had willed to make himself the object of his own life, he could have surrounded himself with every luxury; but, instead thereof, "though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." In this he magnified his lowliness.

But I think I see more of his lowliness at times in *his associates* than in anything else; because men may be very poor, and yet they may be very proud. I think I have seen it sadly so. I have known men without a penny wherewith to bless themselves as full of caste feeling as the wealthiest peer. They are working-men, it may be, but they think themselves superior persons, of remarkable gifts, and eminent respectability. We are a little overdone with superior persons just now. Almost everywhere I come across them, in this department and in that, and, of course, I look up to them with such respect as I can; but sometimes a little more reverence is asked of us than we can conveniently bestow. In this age we have to be careful not to trench upon the dignity of certain persons; and yet he who was in all respects superior to us all, never played the superior person once in all his life. He sat on a well, and talked to a woman; and his disciples, we read, marvelled that he spoke to *a woman*. It is not "*the women*," as we get it in our Authorized Version, but the Revised Version puts it more correctly, "they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman." They thought that such a one as he should not speak to any woman; for they were tinctured with the exclusiveness of the period. I do not suppose that it occurred to our Lord that he was doing anything remarkable in speaking to a woman; for he was born of

woman, and he never disowned the tender ties which come of such a birth. To some men it would be a great come-down to speak familiarly to any one if he did not keep a carriage. Even in our churches the silly caste feeling will intrude, and brethren in Christ hardly think a poor saint to be their equal. Our Lord had no pride of manner about him, for his lowliness was in his heart. We read that the *publicans and sinners* gathered round him: even women of ill-fame listened with tearful eyes to his teaching. Oh, no, *we* never mention them, of course! We call them "outcasts," and treat them as offcasts: yet Jesus had a kind word for them. What a congregation he often had, of those whom Pharisees abhorred! yet he never said to one of them, "Begone!" His rule was to welcome all, saying, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Those publicans were certainly very mean characters; they collected a hateful tax for the foreigner, and squeezed out an extra portion for themselves: but yet the Saviour never said to a single publican "Begone!" Quite the contrary, he gave the publican an honourable place in his parable; he made one of them an apostle, and he went to abide in the house of another, who received him joyfully. He did not merely speak a good word to these degraded persons, but he actually sat at table with them as a friend. "Horrible, was it not?" So the Pharisees thought. "Glorious," say we, as we reverence that divine humility which scorned nothing that lived, and especially nothing in the form of man or woman. "This man receiveth sinners," was said in disdain: let it be thundered out in a hymn as glorious as the song of the seraphim, who continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" Never was purity more pure than when its incarnation bowed to become "a Friend of publicans and sinners."

He did what was more singular still: he received *little children*. Now, I can see some reason for talking with grown-up men and women, even if they be debased and depraved; but as for those boys and girls, what can be done with them? When they heard the children crying "Hosanna" in the temple, the Pharisees demanded of him, "Hearest thou what *these* say?" As much as to say, "These boys! are these thine admirers? Dost thou find thy followers among children?" He had a lowly answer for them; but it was one which silenced them. These hosannas came of our blessed Lord having said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." He accepted children as the pattern of the kind of people who enter his kingdom; he himself was called God's holy child Jesus; and he was at home with children because of his perfect guilelessness and gentleness. Proud men seldom care for children, nor children for them; but our Lord, in his true lowliness of heart loved children, and they loved him.

I wish we had a longer time in which to set out all the lovely lowliness of our adorable Christ; but I must only gather a few ears where I would have preferred to have reaped sheaves. Our Lord's *patient bearing under accusations* that were so foul and false, was another proof of his lowliness. "I hear," says a man, "that a calumny has been whispered against me, and I will drag it to light. I will have it out, let it cost what it may. Who dares breathe upon my character? He shall feel the law, and know that he cannot defame me with impunity." Some professing Christians appear to lose their balance when

misrepresented : the lamb roars like a lion, and the ox eats flesh like the leopard. Churches have been rent, and families ruined, to avenge a hasty word. Is not that spirit the opposite of the mind of our blessed Master ? They said he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber : the charge must have grieved him, but he did not become angry, and threaten his accusers. It was most important that his character should be cleared ; he smiled to himself as he thought, "I will not contradict the accusation, for everybody knows that it is not true." They said that he had a devil, and he did condescend to answer *that*, and confounded all his accusers by making them see the absurdity of the charge ; for if the devil was in Jesus fighting against the devil, then the devil must have become divided against himself, and his kingdom would soon come to an end. Towards the end of our Lord's life, his enemies gathered up their charges, and flung them in set form before Pilate's judgment-seat, but he answered them never a word : "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter ; and like a lamb dumb before her shearer, so opened he not his mouth." In silence he maintained his lowliness. Oh, if he had spoken who could speak as never man spake ; if he had defended himself with his own irresistible oratory, with such a subject as himself to speak upon, he might have made them all go out of the judgment-hall, as once he had scattered them when his client was a woman taken in adultery. He might have turned the crowd against their rulers, had he chosen ; or divided their counsels by setting Pharisees against Sadducees, but he sought not himself. He had been content to ask, "Which of you convinceth me of sin ?" "For which of those works do ye stone me ?" And when he came to his end he had no harder word for them than "Father, forgive them !"

To crown all, you know how our Well-beloved *died*. He laid down his life for us—dearest pledge of lowliness ! The decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem was no famous death in battle, amid the roar of cannon, and the blast of trumpet, shaking heaven and earth with tidings of victory. His was no death amid the tears of a nation who prepare for their beloved prince a more than royal mourning. No, he dies with malefactors ; he dies at the common gallows ; he dies amid a crowd of scoffers, where felons cast contempt upon him as he hangs between them. Hear how the ribald throng challenge his divine sonship, and say, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross !" The bearing of such obloquy, the endurance of such scorn, was the utmost proof of a lowliness of spirit which we humbly admire, and feebly imitate, but which we can never equal.

II. I shall but occupy you one or two minutes while I try to explain THE CAUSE OF THIS LOWLINESS.

His supreme lowliness of character grew out of *the actual lowliness of his heart*. He never aimed at humility, nor laboured after it : it was natural to him. Of all sickening things, the pride that apes humility is the most loathsome : not a particle of that nauseous vice was found in our Lord. He never puts on an air, nor strikes an attitude, nor plays the humble part ; but he *is* meek and lowly, and all can see it. He is never other than he seems to be, and he always is and seems to be the meekest of mankind. His inmost heart was seen, and seen to be all lowliness.

Why was he so? I conceive that he was so lowly because *he was so great*. A little man feels the necessity of magnifying himself, and therefore becomes proud. Pride is essentially meanness. It is the little man that cannot afford to be-little himself. Some of us are too low to be lowly, too mean to be meek. True greatness is ever unconscious, and never seeks to make a display. It magnifies a man when he can sink himself for the good of others. No one knew how to descend so gracefully as our Lord, for his great mind knew well the ways of self-denial. A man who is greatly rich is not ashamed to be seen in well-worn clothes in those same places where the pretentious bankrupt would not venture except in his newest attire. He who has a small estate puts a diamond ring upon his finger, and holds it so that it sparkles in the light, to let all people see that he is a man worth something; but your eminent men of wealth scorn such display. Truly great men are humble. I have often heard it said of men of large substance, "He is singularly unassuming; you would never dream that he is a man of property." So, too, of men of genius have we heard it said, "he gave himself no airs, he was as modest and friendly as the least of us." Just so; and that very much accounts for his high standing. He that is somebody to others is nobody to himself. He who was more than all, even our Lord Jesus Christ, was, therefore, for that very reason, lowly of heart.

He was lowly, next, because *he was so loving*. Mothers are frequently proud of their children, but, I think, they are seldom, if ever, proud to their children. No, if they love them, they do not think that it is any condescension to kiss them, or wash them, or carry them in their bosom. I never heard of a father who thought that he was very humble-minded because he allowed his boy to clamber upon his knee, and hold on with his arms about his neck. Those whom we love we elevate to an equality with ourselves; or, rather, we go down to them. Love is a charming leveller. Jesus had so much love that he could not be anything but lowly towards his little ones. You never yet heard even a blasphemer impute pride to God. Though our blood has chilled when we have heard the High and Mighty One arraigned for this and that by arrogant tongues; yet we have not known profanity to run in that line. It would be too absurd to impute pride either to God, or to his ever-blessed Son, Jesus Christ. The reason for this evident freedom from pride is the fact that "God is love." The fulness of divine love blinds the eye which looks askance upon it. God is patient, for he is loving: Christ is lowly of heart, because his heart is made of love.

Moreover, once more, our blessed Master was *so absorbed in his great object* that he was necessarily lowly. The man who is driving at a great object has no time for the affectations of self-adulation. He has no time in which to think of how he appears to others. He does not stand at the glass to arrange his beauties; the idea would be too absurd. He cannot be too particular about how he puts that poetic word, or how he mouths that polished sentence; his sole desire is to deliver his message, and to impress men with the matter in hand. Earnestness carries the speaker beyond the orator's rules of self-display; his rhetoric is melted down by his enthusiasm. A great orator can readily be made to appear ridiculous by the comic critic, who coolly looks down from the

gallery upon him; but what cares he? His theme so absorbs him that he has forgotten all elegance of attitude and gesture, and only cares to carry his point. He would make himself a fool, ten thousand times deep, if he could but win his suit, and bless his country thereby. He cares for nothing but his subject and his aim. So is it pre-eminently with our Lord: he pursues his course careless of man's esteem. He burns his way, his zeal eats him up, he is straitened till his work is accomplished, and therefore he has no thought about the maintaining of his dignity. His greatness and his intense devotion forbid anything approximating to pride, and by force of nature he is meek and lowly in heart. Because he has a great object to achieve, and that object has absorbed his whole self, he must walk in all lowliness of mind. Blessed Master, teach us this way of lowliness! Fire us with an ambition for thy glory which shall shut out every thought of pride!

III. What are the LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS LOWLINESS of our Lord?

The lessons are, first, brethren, *let us be lowly*. Did I hear one say, "Well, I will try to be lowly"? You cannot do it in that way. We must not try to act the lowly part; we must *be* lowly, and then we shall naturally act in a humble manner. It is astonishing how much of pride there is in the most modest. Of course I do not mean in those who say that they are perfect. No, I leave them to their own vain-glory; but in us poor, imperfect creatures, what a deal of pride there is! How we condemn pride! We feel that it would be well if all were as humble as we are. We boast that we detest boasting. We flatter ourselves that we hate flattery. When we are told that we are singularly free from pride, we feel as proud as Lucifer himself at the consciousness that the compliment is right well deserved. We are so experienced, so solid, so discerning, so free from self-confidence, that we are the first to be caught in the net of self-satisfaction. Brethren, we must pray God to make us humble. If we become lowliest of the lowly it will not be much of a condescension on our part; we shall only come down to the point which we ought never to have left. Down in the dust is the fit place for such poor mortals as we are. What right have we to be anything else but meek and lowly?

Alas! we can be very proud in many ways: let me give you a case or two in point. Yonder is one that is called to suffer, and he rebels against it. Hear his complaint—"Why should I be called to endure such great trials? What have I done that I am thus tried?" Do you not at once detect the great "I"? Very different is this from the lowly prayer, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

"But, then, persons have spoken evil of me. I do not deserve to be treated thus." Clearly it is specially wrong for any one to speak amiss of such an excellent being as you are. There lies the grievance. Because you are so good, it is horrible wickedness to traduce you. You reply, "But, really, it was so malicious, and the charge was so absurd and unreasonable." Just so. People ought to be peculiarly careful not to hurt your feelings, for you are so deserving and praiseworthy. Is not self-esteem the spring of half our sorrow? We are so wonderfully good in our own judgment that we claim the box-seat of the coach, and the chief seat in the synagogue. If we were really lowly of heart, we

should say, "I have been treated very badly, but when I think of how my Lord was treated, I cannot dream of complaining. This severe critic cannot see my excellences; but I do not wonder, for I cannot see them myself. He has been finding fault with me, and his charges were not true; but, if he had known me better, he might have found more fault with me, and have been nearer the truth. If I do not deserve censure in this way, I do in another; and so I will cheerfully bear what is measured out to me. Yea, if it be in no sense my due, I will give my back to the smiters, as my Master did." Oh, that the Lord would make us meek and lowly in heart, and we should submit to wrong rather than resist evil!

"But surely," cries one, "you do not want me to associate with sinners!" No, dear friend, I do not want such a good person as you are to go near them at all; I could not so degrade your honourable self. Moreover, if you did go near them, you would aggravate them by your self-opinionated goodness. If your perfections are not quite so full-blown as usual, I would, however, suggest that you might do sinners good by kindly speaking to them; and that to gather up your skirts in fear and trembling, lest you should be defiled by their presence is not the most excellent way. When you are afraid lest the wind should blow from a sinful person towards your nobility, you act the fool, if not the hypocrite; perhaps both. Why, you would have been in hell yourself if it had not been for sovereign grace! You, fine ladies and prime gentlefolk, you would have been as surely cast away as the vilest of mankind, if it had not been for infinite compassion! It ill becomes us to boast, since we have enough sins of our own to plunge us in despair, were it not for the love of the lowly Saviour, who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree. O Lord, stamp out our pride, and make us lowly in heart!

Lastly, *let us learn to say to the despondent and timorous words of cheer.* Since the Lord Jesus Christ is so meek and lowly, poor, trembling, guilty one, you may come to him! You may come to him now! I was sitting the other night amongst some excellent friends, who, I suppose, were none of them rich, and some of them poor. I am sure it never entered into my head to think how much money they owned, for I felt myself very much at home with them, until one of them remarked, "You do not mind mixing with us poor folk?" Then I felt quite ashamed for myself that they should think it necessary to make such a remark. I was so much one with them that I felt honoured by having fellowship with them in the things of God, and it troubled me that they should think I was doing anything remarkable in conversing with them. Dear friends, do not think hardly of any of us who are ministers of Christ; and you will think hardly of us if you conceive that we think it a coming-down to associate with any of you! We are in heart and soul your brothers, bone of your bone, your truest friends whether you are rich or poor. We desire your good, for we are your servants for Christ's sake. Above all, do not think hardly of our Lord and Master by supposing that it will be a strange thing for him to come to your house, or to your heart. It is his habit to forgive the guilty, and renew the sinful. Come to him at once, and he will accept you now. Jesus is exceedingly approachable. He is not hedged about

with guards to keep off the poor or the sinful. Your room may be very humble; what cares he for that? He will come, and hear your prayer. Many a time Jesus has had no room to pray in, but

“Cold mountains, and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervour of his prayer.”

Do you complain that you cannot arrange your words correctly? What is that to him? He looks more at the sincerity of your heart than at the grammar of your language. Let your heart talk to him without words, and he will understand you.

Do you complain with shamed face that you are such a sinner? You are not the first sinner that Jesus has met with, nor will you be the last. You are heavy-laden with sin; but he knows more about the weight of sin than you do. That terrible load of guilt wearies you; but it pressed him down even more terribly when it brought him into the dust of death. It makes you weep to think of sin; but it caused him to sweat great drops of blood. You feel that you cannot live under so crushing a burden; and he did not live under it, but gave up the ghost in agony. Do not crucify your Lord afresh by suspecting that he is proud, and will therefore pass you by. Do not insult him by dreaming that he will reject you for your insignificance or unworthiness. Come, and welcome, to him who will delight to bless you. Come to him at once, without further question or hesitation. Come just as you are, fall at his pierced feet, and trust the merit of his blood, and the good Lord will accept you on the spot, for he has said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

God bless you, by leading you all to love this lowly and loving Lord! Even at this present moment I pray that you may take that step which will secure our meeting in heaven to adore eternally our King, so meek and lowly, who will then dwell in the midst of us, and lead us to living fountains of water!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xi.

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