

— Modern English Series —

HUMILITY

*Micah's Message
for Today*

CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

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Sermon No. 2328; intended for reading on Lord's Day, October 1, 1893. Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Thursday evening, August 22, 1889. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 800-297-4307.

The *Modern English Series* has been adapted for today's reader with punctuation, minor word order changes, headings, and substitution of modern pronouns for *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine*.

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HUMILITY

Micah's Message for Today

*"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy, and
to walk humbly with thy God?"*

—Micah 6:8

TO “walk humbly” with God is the essence of the Law of God, the spiritual side of it—its Ten Commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The Law is spiritual and touches the thoughts, intents, emotions, words, and actions—but especially God demands the *heart*. Now it is our great joy that what the Law requires, the gospel gives. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:4). In Him we meet the requirements of the Law, first, by what He has done for us and next, by what He works in us. He conforms us to the Law of God. He makes us, by His Spirit, not for our righteousness but for His Glory, to render to the Law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the Law is “fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:4).

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God—and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfill these three divine requirements. These we fulfill perfectly in our desire—we would be holy as God is holy if we could live as our heart aspires to live: we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy, and we would always walk humbly with God. The Holy Spirit daily aids us to do this by working in us “to will and to do of [God’s] good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). And the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve Him day and night in His Temple and shall render to Him an absolutely perfect obedience, for, “they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:5).

Today I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, “Walk humbly with thy God,” asking first, What is the nature of this humility? And secondly, Where does this humility show itself? First,

I. What Is the Nature of This Humility?

The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

A. *Humility belongs to the highest form of character.*

Observe what precedes our text: “to do justly, and to love mercy.” Suppose a man has done that; suppose that in both these things he has come up to the divine standard, what then? Why, then he must *walk humbly with God*! If we walk in the Light of God, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with Him (1Jo 1:7a), we still need to walk before God very humbly, always looking to the blood—for, even then, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses and continues to cleanse us from all sin (1Jo 1:7b). If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants—we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ’s gracious help.

But if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us, and every act was right towards man—and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbor as strong as our love to ourselves—even then there would come in this precept, “Walk humbly with thy God.”

Dear friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian grace—I almost hope that you never will think so—but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments, but walk humbly with your God! I believe that the more grace a man has, the more he feels his deficiency of grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort—they have always disclaimed anything like perfection! They have always laid low before God—and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were, at all, the objects of reverence among their fellow Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory¹ remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them. And therein I admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them, returns to them with interest!

Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners—for whom there is still the Fountain open. This Fountain is not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still

¹ **depreciatory** – belittling, disparaging.

continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash therein and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character. It is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, to “be clothed with humility” (1Pe 5:5), as if, after we had put on the whole armor of God, we put this over all to cover it all up! We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the armor of brass upon the knees to shine before men, but clothing ourselves like officers in civilian clothes, we conceal the beauties that will eventually the more reveal themselves.

B. The humility here prescribed involves constant communion with God.

Observe that we are told to walk humbly *with* God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people “very proudly humble,” very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God! They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said. They were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This true humility *makes* us walk with God. Beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God and pleaded with Him for Sodom, said, “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). “Dust” set forth the frailty of his nature. “Ashes” were as the refuse of the altar which could not be burnt up, and which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatever. And that was not because he was away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God, but coming near to the Lord you rightly sing,

*“The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”*

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather gauge showing your communion—whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. “He must increase,” said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus, “but I must decrease.” The two things go together—if this scale rises, that scale must go down. *“Walk humbly with thy God.”*

Dare to stay with God! Dare to have Him as your daily Friend! Be bold enough to come to Him Who is within the veil! Talk with Him, walk with Him as a man walks with his familiar friend—but walk humbly with Him. You will do so if you walk truly. I cannot conceive such a thing—it is impossible—a man walking

proudly with God! He takes his fellow by the arm and feels that he is as good as his neighbor, perhaps superior to him, but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that! The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility, but the sinful with the Thrice-Holy? This throws us down into the dust.

C. This humility implies constant activity.

“Walk humbly with thy God.” Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” But the answer is not, “Bow humbly before God,” but “Walk humbly” with God.

Now, Beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern (large, of course, only to us), if we have work after work—we are too apt to forget that we are only servants. We are doing all the business for our Master; we are only commission agents for Him.

We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm. We would not think so if we thought steadily for a moment, for we would know our right position. But in the midst of activity, we get cumbered with much serving, and we are too apt to get off our proper level.

Perhaps we have to rule others, and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk, but it must not be so. You must learn not only to be humble in the closet of communion, and to be humble with your Bible before you—but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do when you have as much as ever you can do! When, from morning to night, you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know—not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was, “Mrs. Martha,” and the housewife is a queen! But Mary sat in the servant’s place at Jesus’ feet. If Martha’s heart could have been where Mary’s body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us “Martha-Marys,” or “Mary-Marthas,” whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

D. This humility denotes progress.

I do not think it far-fetched to say so. The man is to walk, and that is progress, advancing. “Walk humbly.” I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better. They call that humility, but it begins with an “s” in English and the full word is *sloth*. “I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is.” You are not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God! Go forward! Advance! Not with a proud desire to

excel your fellow Christians, not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more grace—but still walk, go on, advance, grow! Be enriched with all the precious things of God. Be filled with all the fullness of God. Walk on, always walk. Lie not down in despair! Roll not in the dust with desperation because you think high things impossible for you. Walk—but walk humbly.

You will soon find out, if you make any progress, that you have need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud. And I am persuaded that when a man advances, he gets humbler—and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us. For this He visits us in the night and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more grace and get to higher attainments by being more humble, “for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1Pe 5:5). If you will climb the mountainside, you shall be thirsty among the barren crags. But if you will descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander and the brooks flow among the meadows, you shall drink to your full! Does not the hart pant for the water brooks? Do you pant for them? They flow in the Valley of Humiliation! The Lord bring us all there!

E. The humility here prescribed implies constancy.

“Walk humbly with thy God.” Not sometimes be humble, but *always* walk humbly with your God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we would be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same myself, “I felt very broken down and lay very low at my Master’s feet.” Were you so the next day? And the day after, did you continue so?

Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because of our great debt to our Master, begging that He would not be hard with us—and is it not possible, tomorrow, to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God’s people would do that, but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it—one day acknowledging your Father’s authority and doing His will, and another day standing outside the door and refusing to go in when the prodigal son has come home. “You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. I have been a consistent believer, yet I never have any high joys; but as soon as your son came, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved and he is in an ecstasy of delight! How can this be right?” (Luk 15).

O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with your Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers—and then to come out and to be “My Lord,” some very great one in the midst of the Church and in the world. This will

never do! It is not said, “Bow humbly before God now and then.” But as a regular, constant thing, “Walk humbly with thy God.” It is not, “Bow your head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which you cannot deny,” but, in the brightness of your purity and the clearness of your holiness, still keep your heart in lowly reverence bowing before the Throne of God!

F. The humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence.

Let me read the text to you, “Walk humbly with God.” No, no, we must not maul the passage that way! “Walk humbly with *thy* God.” Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ—that is unbelief! Do not think that it is humility to think that He is another man’s God and not yours—“Walk humbly with thy God.”

Know that He is your God! Be sure of it—come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved’s and that He is yours! Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives Himself to you—take Him to be yours by a covenant of salt that never shall be broken—and give yourself to Him, saying, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (Song 6:3). “Walk humbly with thy God.”

Let not anything draw you away from that confidence. But then, in comes the humility. This is all of grace! This is all the result of divine election! Therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but He has chosen you! This is all the effect of redeeming love—therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit—

*“Then give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs.”*

“Walk humbly with thy God.” I lie at His feet as one unworthy and cry,
*“Why did this come to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that You
have made to pass before me.”*

I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I have to answer the question,

II. Where Does This Humility Show Itself?

I have what might be a long task—a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hourglass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, “Let

us have another glass,” and they turned it over again, and went on for another hour! But I am not going to do that. I do not wish to weary you and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Where, then, does this humility show itself?

It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to *try* to be humble, but to *be* humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility—when he is very humble to everybody—he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, especially, walk humbly with God *when your graces are strong and vigorous*: when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word and, especially, when the Lord gives you success in His service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among His people and has laid His hand upon you, and said, “Go in this, thy might” (Jdg 6:14). Then, “Walk humbly with thy God.”

The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon—perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar—but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the Evil One tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, “Walk humbly with thy God.”

Next, *when you have a great deal of work to do and the Lord is calling you to it*, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with your God. Do you ask, “How?” By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself—and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any! When you are weak, by acknowledging your weakness, you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God; cry to Him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, “Open, thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise” (Psa 51:15). Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God. Yield yourself up to be worked upon by Him, so that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my brother, your people will soon find it out. “*Oh, to be nothing, nothing! Only to lie at His feet!*” Then it is, when walking humbly with our God in service, that He will fill us and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God *in all your aims*. When you are seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it is the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man or any woman tries to work in the Sunday school, or if anyone preaches in the open-air or in the House of God with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous brother or sister, then let this word come into your ears—“Walk humbly with thy God.”

There is a word that Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes: “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not” (Jer 45:5). You young men of the College,² do not always be hunting up big places. Be willing to go to small places to preach the gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum, go and let your aim always be this: “I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God!” “Walk humbly with thy God.” You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs! Sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising—think only of your Lord’s glory. “Walk humbly with thy God.”

Walk humbly with God also *in studying His Word and in believing His truth*. We have a number of men nowadays who are critics of the Bible. The Bible stands bound at their bar, no, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected; they have no feeling of decency towards it. They will cut out its very heart. They will rend asunder its most tender parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the Beloved Apostle’s Gospel,³ or the Book of Revelation is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing—their scalpel, their knife cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be, and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire to always sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever! I am prepared to believe whatever it says and to take it, believing it to be the Word of God; if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false, but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not here have a Guide that is infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so after all. I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide perpetually—

² **College** – the Pastors College which Spurgeon had founded for the training of the next generation of Baptist preachers in England.

³ **Beloved Apostle’s Gospel** – a reference to the Gospel of John, as John referred to himself not by name, but as the apostle “whom Jesus loved” (Joh 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

but I am not qualified to do that, and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all.

Sit down, Reason, and let Faith rise up! If the Lord has said it, let God be true and every man a liar (Rom 3:4)! If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science—the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. “Ah,” you say, “you are an old-fashioned fogey.” Yes, I am. I will not disclaim any compliment that you choose to pass upon me, and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book! This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation—it smote the Papacy—and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand still, my brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and “walk humbly with thy God” as to His truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, *as to mercies received*. You were ill a short while ago and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business. You wear a much better coat than you used to come here in, but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman! Now you get into very good society, you say, but do not be ashamed to come to the Prayer Meeting along with the Lord’s poor—and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. “Walk humbly with thy God,” or else it may be that He will take you down a notch or two and bring you back to your old poverty—and then what will you say to yourself for your folly?

Next, walk humbly with God *under great trials*. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride! Murmur not, but bow low. Say, “Lord, if You strike me, I deserve more than You lay upon me. You have not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement.”

Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no—say, It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him (see Jdg 10:15).

And next, walk humbly with God *in your devotions*, as between yourself and God in your chamber. Do you read? Read humbly. Do you pray? Pray humbly. Do you sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Take care—when your God and yourself are together, and no one else—that when you show Him your humble heart with deep humility, that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly *as between yourself and your brethren*. Ask not to be head choir master. Desire not to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on—the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard men say, “Well, but you must stand up for your dignity.” I lost mine a long time ago, and I never thought it was worth while

to look for it! As to the dignity of the pastor, if he has no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest place—and if we will do so, our brethren will take care that, before long, they will say to us, “Go up higher” (Luk 14:10). In your dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that if you are strong now, you may very soon be as weak as your brethren are.

And *in dealing with sinners*, “walk humbly with thy God.” Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view! Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there were a pair of tongs handy, but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, Beloved, we must come down from all lofty places and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject as to your circumstances. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after a higher place—“walk humbly with thy God.” Take what He gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all His mercy, and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbling. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. “Walk humbly with thy God.” In all your thoughts of holy things, be humble. Thoughts of God should lay you low. Thoughts of Christ should bring you to His feet. Thoughts of the Holy Spirit should make you grieve for having vexed Him. Thoughts of every covenant blessing should make you wonder that such privileges ever came to you. Thoughts of heaven should make you marvel that you should ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of hell should make you humble,

*“For were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been mine.”*

Oh, brothers and sisters, may the Lord help us to walk humbly with God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking *rightly* of yourself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble, here, will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master, by-and-by.

The Lord bless this word, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

