

## Our Lord in the Valley of Humiliation.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Philippians 2: 8

Paul wishes to unite the saints in Philippi in the holy bands of love. To do this he takes them to the cross. Beloved, there is a cure for every spiritual disease in the cross. There is food for every spiritual virtue in the Saviour. We never go to him too often. He is never a dry well, or a vine from which every cluster has been taken. We do not think enough of him. We are poor because we do not go to the gold country which lieth round the cross. We are often sad because we do not see the bright light that shines from the constellation of the cross. The beams from that constellation would give us instantaneous joy and rest, if we perceived them. If any lover of the souls of men would do for them the best possible service, he would constantly take them near to Christ. Paul is always doing so; and he is doing it here.

The apostle knew that, to create concord, you need first to beget lowliness of mind. Men do not quarrel when their ambitions have come to an end. When each one is willing to be least, when every one desires to place his fellows higher than himself there is an end to party spirit; schisms and divisions are all passed away. Now in order to create lowliness of mind, Paul, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, spoke about the lowliness of Christ. He would have us go down, and so he takes us to see our Master going down. He leads us to those steep stairs down which the Lord of glory took his lowly way, and he bids us stop while, in the words of our text, he points us to the lowly Christ: "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Before Paul thus wrote he had indicated in a word or two the height from which Jesus originally came. He says of him, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." You and I can have no idea of how high an honor it is to be equal with God. How can we, therefore, measure the descent of Christ, when our highest thoughts cannot comprehend the height from which he came! The depth to which he descended is immeasurably below any point we have ever reached; and the height from which he came is inconceivably above our loftiest thought. Do not, however, forget the glory that Jesus laid aside for a while. Remember that he is very God of very God, and that he dwelt in the highest heaven with his Father: but, yet, though he was thus infinitely rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

First of all, consider the facts of our Lord's humiliation.

Paul speaks first of the point from which he still descends: "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." My gracious Lord, thou hast come far enough already; dost thou not stop where thou art? In the form of God thou wast? in the form of man thou art? That is an unspeakable stoop. What thou still humble thyself? Yes, says the text, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." Yet, surely one would have thought that he was low enough. He was the Creator, and we see him here on earth as a creature; the Creator, who made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made, and yet he lieth in the virgin's womb; he is born, and he is cradled where the horned oxen feed. The Creator is also a creature. The Son of God is the Son of Man. Strange combination! Could condescension go farther than for the infinite to be joined to the infant and the omnipotent to the feebleness of a new-born babe?

Yet, this is not all. If the Lord of life and glory must needs be married to a creature, and the high and mighty one must take upon himself the form of a created being, yet why does he assume the form of man? There were other creatures brighter than the stars, noble, spiritual beings, seraphim and cherubim, sons of the morning, presence-angels of the eternal throne; why did he not take their nature? If he must be in union with a creature, why not be joined to the angels? But, "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." A man is but a worm, a creature of many infirmities. On his brow death has written with his terrible finger. He is corruptible, and he must die. Will the Christ take the nature upon him, that he too, must suffer and die? It was even so; but when had he come so far we feel as if we must almost put ourselves in the way to stop him from going farther. Is not this stoop low enough? The text says that it was not, for, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself" even then.

What will not Christ do for us who have been given to him by his Father? There is no measure to his love; you cannot comprehend his grace. Oh, how we ought to love him and serve him! The lower he stoops to save us the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level and becomes man, he

still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet: "Being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself."

But notice now the rule of his descent; it is worth noticing: "He humbled himself and became obedient." I have known persons try to humble themselves by will-worship. I have stood in the cell of a monk, when he has been out of it, and I have seen the whip with which he flagellated himself every night before he went to bed. I thought that it was quite possible that the man deserved all he suffered, and so I shed no tears over it. That was his way of humbling himself by administering a certain number of lashes. I have known persons practice voluntary humility. They have talked in very humble language, and have decryed themselves in words, though they have been as proud as Lucifer all the while. Our Lord's way of humbling himself was by obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." To obey is better than to wear a special dress, or to clip your words in some peculiar form of supposed humility. Obedience is the best humility, laying yourself at the feet of Jesus, and making your will active only when you know what it is God's will for you to do. Thus I have shown you that Jesus did descend after he became man; and I have pointed out to you the way and the rule of his descending. Now let us look with awe and reverence at the abyss into which he descended. Where did he arrive, at length, in that dreadful descent? What was the bottom of the abyss? It was death: "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Our Lord died willingly. You and I, unless the Lord should come quickly, will die whether we are willing or not: "It is appointed unto men once to die." He needed not to die, yet he was willing to surrender his life. He said, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." He died willingly; but, at the same time, he did not die by his own hand; he did not take his own life as a suicide; he died obediently. He waited till his hour had come, when he was able to say, "It is finished," then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. He humbled himself, so was willing to die.

He proved the obedience of his death also by the meekness of it, as Isaiah said, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He never spoke a bitter word to priest or scribe, Jewish governor or Roman soldier. When the women wept and bewailed he said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." He was all gentleness; he had not a hard word even for his murderers. He gave himself up to be the sin-bearer without murmuring at his Father's will, or at the cruelty of his adversaries. How patient he was! If he says, "I thirst," it is not the petulant cry of a sick man in his fever; there is a royal dignity about Christ's utterance of the words. Even the "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," with the unutterable gall and bitterness it contains, has not a trace of impatience mingled with it. Oh, what a death Christ's was! He was obedient in it, obedient not only till he came to die, but obedient in the last dread act. His obedient life embraced the hour of his departure.

But as if death were not sufficiently humbling, the apostle adds, "even the death of the cross." That was the worst kind of death. It was a violent death. Jesus fell not asleep gently, as good men often do, whose end is peace. No, he died by murderous hands. Jews and gentiles combined, and with cruel hands took him, and crucified and slew him. It was, also, an extremely painful death of lingering agony. Those parts of the body in which the nerves were most numerous were pierced with rough iron nails. The weight of the body was made to hang upon the tenderest part of the frame. No doubt the nails tore their cruel way through his flesh while he was hanging on the tree. A cut in the hand has often resulted in lockjaw; yet Christ's hands were nailed to the cross. He died in pain most exquisite of body and of soul. It was, also, a death most shameful. Thieves were crucified with him; his adversaries stood and mocked him. The death of the cross was one reserved for slaves and the basest of felons; no Roman citizen could be put to death in such a way as that, hung up between earth and heaven, as if neither would have him, rejected of men and despised of God. It was, also, a penal death. He died, not like a hero in battle, nor as one who perishes while rescuing his fellow-men from fire or flood; he died as a criminal. Upon the cross of Calvary he was hung up. It was an accursed death, too. God himself had called it so: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He was made a curse for us. His death was penal in the highest sense. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

I have not the mental, nor the physical, nor the spiritual strength to speak to you aright on such a wonderful topic as that of our Lord in the Valley of Humiliation. There have been times with me when I have only wanted a child's finger to point me to the Christ, and I have found enough in a sight of him without any words of man. I hope that it is so with you tonight. I invite you too sit down and watch your Lord obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All this he did that he might complete his own humiliation, he humbled himself even to the lowest of all, "unto death, even the death of the cross."

II. If you have this picture clearly before your eyes I want you, in the second place, to practically learn some lessons from our Lord's humiliation.

The first is, learn firmness of faith in the atoning sacrifice. If my Lord could stoop to become a man; and if, when he had come as low as that, he went still lower, and lower, and lower, until he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, I feel that there

must be a potency about that death which is all that I can require. Jesus by dying has vindicated law and justice. Look, brethren, if God can punish sin upon his own dear Son, it means far more than the sending of us to hell. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin; but his blood was shed, so there is remission.

His wounds let out his life blood, one great gash opened the way to his heart; before that, his whole body had become a mass of dripping gore, when, in the garden, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. My Lord when I study thy sacrifice I see how God can be "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Faith is born at the cross of Christ. We not only bring faith to the cross, but we find it there. I cannot think of my God bearing all this grief in a human body, even to the death of the cross, and then doubt. Why, doubt becomes harder than faith when the cross is visible! When Christ is set forth evidently crucified among us, each one of us should cry, "Lord, I believe, for thy death has killed my unbelief."

The next lesson I would have you learn from Christ's humiliation is this, cultivate a great hatred of sin. Sin killed Christ; let Christ kill sin! Sin made him go down, down, down; then pull sin down, let it have no throne in your heart. If it will live in your heart, make it live in holes and corners, and never rest until it is utterly driven out. Seek to put your foot upon its neck, and utterly kill it. Christ was crucified; let your lusts be crucified; and let every wrong desire be nailed up, with Christ upon the felon's tree. If, with Paul, you can say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;" with him you will also be able to exclaim, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus;" Christ's branded slave is the Lord's freeman.

Learn another lesson, and that is, obedience. Beloved, if Christ humbled himself and became obedient, how obedient ought you and I to be! We ought to stop at nothing when we once know that it is the Lord's will. I marvel that you and I should ever raise a question or ask a moment's delay in our obedience to Christ. If it be the Lord's will let it be done, and done at once. Should it rend some fond connection, should it cause a flood of tears, let it be done. He humbled himself and became obedient. Would obedience humble me? Would it lower me in man's esteem? Would it make me the subject to ridicule? Would it bring contempt upon my honorable name? Should I be elbowed out of the society wherein I have been admired, if I were obedient to Christ? Lord, this is a question not worth the asking? I take up thy cross right joyfully, asking grace to be perfectly obedient, by the power of thy spirit.

I think we should also learn from our Lord's humiliation to have contempt for human glory. Suppose they come to you and say, "We will crown you king!" you may well say, "Will you? All the crown you had for my Master was a crown of thorns; I will not except a diadem from you." "We will praise you." "What, will you praise me, you who spat in his dear face? I want none of your praises." It is a greater honor to a Christian man to be maligned than to be applauded. Aye, I do not care where it comes from, I will say this; if he be slandered and abused for Christ's sake, no odors in his honor, no articles in his praise, can do him one-tenth the honor. This is to be a true knight of the cross, to have been wounded in the fray, to have come back adorned with scars for his dear sake. O despised one, look upon human glory as a thing that is tarnished, no longer golden; but corroded because it came not to your Lord.

And, O beloved, I think, when we have meditated on this story of Christ's humbling himself, we ought to feel our love to our Lord growing very vehement! We do not half love him as we ought. When I read the sentences of Bernard, I feel as if I had not begun to love my Lord; and when I turn over Rutherford's letters, and see the glow of his heart toward his divine Master, I could smite on my breast to think that I have such a heart of stone where there ought to be a heart of flesh. If you hear George Herbert sing his quaint, strange poetry, suffused with love for his dear Lord, you may well think that you are a tyro in the school of love. Aye, and if you ever drink in the spirit of McCheyne, you may go home and hide your head, and say, "I am not worthy to sing—"

"Jesus, lover of my soul,"

for I do not return his love as I ought to do." Come seek his wounds, and let your hearts be wounded. Come, look to his heart that poured out blood and water, and give your heart up to him. Put your whole being now among the sweet spices of his all-sufficient merit, set all on fire with burning affection, and let the fragrance of it go up like incense before the Lord.

Lastly, let us be inflamed with a strong desire to honor Christ. If he humbled himself, let us honor him. Every time that he seems to put away the crown, let us put it on his head. Every time we hear him slandered, and men continue to slander him still,—let us speak up for him manfully.

"Ye that are men, now serve him,  
Against unnumbered foes;  
Your courage rise with danger,  
And strength to strength oppose."

Do you not grow indignant, sometimes, when you see how Christ's professed church is treating him, and his truth? They are shutting him out still, till his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Proclaim him King in the face of his false friends. Proclaim him, and say that his word is infallibly true, and that his precious blood alone can cleanse from sin. Stand out the braver because so many Judases seem to have leaped up from the bottomless pit to betray Christ again. Be you firm and steadfast, like granite walls, in the day when others turn their backs, and fly, like cravens.

The Lord help you to honor him who humbled himself, who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! May he accept these humble words of mine, and bless them to his people, and make them to be the means of leading some poor sinner to come and trust in him! Amen.