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謙卑與聖潔

且對人說：你站開吧！不要挨近我，因為我比你聖潔。(賽六十五 5)

這個世代比以前更加強調在基督裏成聖，憑信成為聖潔的有福真理。但我們所聲稱要追求或達到的聖潔，是否真實而有生命，須經過一項大考驗，那就是——**這聖潔是否生出不住增長的謙卑？** 神的聖潔能住進受造者裏面並藉他返照出來的必要條件是謙卑。在使我們成聖的那位神的聖者(耶穌)身上，我們看見屬天的謙卑是祂的生活、祂的死以及祂被高舉的秘訣。因此試驗聖潔的一個正確無誤之法是，看看我們身上有無在 神和人面前謙卑的標記。謙卑乃聖潔所開出的美麗花朵。

假冒聖潔的主要標記就是缺乏謙卑。每一個追求聖潔的人都必須小心防備，免得不知不覺間，靠聖靈入門卻靠肉身來成全，讓驕傲潛入了最意想不到之處。有兩個人到聖殿裏禱告：一個是法利賽人，另一個是稅吏(參路十八 9-14)。法利賽人竟然可以進入最神聖之處！驕傲居然能夠在 神的殿中抬頭，使對祂的敬拜成為自我抬舉。自從基督這樣揭露了法利賽人的驕傲之後，法利賽人就披上了稅吏的長袍；而深深為自己的罪懺悔的人和自以為擁有最高聖潔的人，都同樣必須儆醒。正當我們熱切地要使心成為 神的殿時，會發現心中有這兩種人在禱告。稅吏所面臨的危機並非來自站在他旁邊那位輕看他的法利賽人，而是來自心中那自高自大的法利賽人。在 神的殿中，我們以為自己身在至聖所，在祂聖潔的同在裏，這時必須提防驕傲。「有一天 神的眾子來侍立在耶和華面前，撒但也來在其中。」(伯一 6)

「神啊！我感謝你，我不像別人……也不像這個稅吏。」就在我們有理由感謝 神時，就在我們向 神獻上感謝時，就在我們承認 神作了一切時，已卻能找到自滿的理由。甚至在聖殿裏聽見懺悔的言語與單單信靠 神憐憫之呼求時，法利賽人發出稱謝聲，語調似乎是在感謝神，其實是在自己臉上貼金。驕傲能夠披上讚美或懺悔的外袍。即使一個人摒棄並定罪「我不像別人」這類的話，然而不知不覺間，與同伴相處或一同教拜時，這種態度仍常會出現於感覺和言語中。如果你要知道事實是否如此，只消去聽聽教會裏的基督徒如何談論別人，在其中幾乎看不見耶穌的柔和謙卑，忘記作為耶穌的僕人，論到自己或彼此談論時，必須以深沉的談論為基調。在許多教會、聖徒的聚會、差會、聯會、團體、委員會，甚至在異教徒中間傳福音的機構裏，不是出現許多不和睦、擾亂、 神的工作受攔阻的情況嗎？這是因為那些被認為是聖徒的人，卻表現出易怒、急躁、無耐性、自我防衛、維護自己的權利、尖刻的判斷、無恩慈的言語，顯明他們不承認別人比自己強——這些都證明他們的聖潔中缺少謙卑；「自我」是一個最頑強的人物，他要求最好、最高的位子，如果他的要求不被認可，他就感覺受到極大的傷害。神僕人之間大多數的爭執，皆源於這巨大「自我」的吵吵嚷嚷。很少人明白「居最末位」的奧秘。也許一個人的靈程裏有過一段大大被降卑、被破碎的時期，但穿上謙卑、具有謙卑的靈，以柔和謙卑的心視自己為眾人之僕，因而表顯出耶穌基督的心跡則又是另一回事。

「你站開吧！因為我比你聖潔。」這對聖潔是何等大的嘲諷！耶穌——聖潔的那一位，也是謙卑的那一位，最聖潔的人永遠是最謙卑的人；除了 神以外，沒有一位是聖潔的，所以我們得著神多少，我們的聖潔就有多少；我們得著 神多少，身上謙卑的真實成分就有多少，因謙卑就是看見 神是一切，而自己消失了。最聖潔的人就是最謙卑的人。唉！雖然以賽亞時代那種公然自誇的猶太人今日不常見，連我們的禮教也教導人不當如此說話，然而在我們對待同作聖徒的人或世界之子的態度上，仍然會流露出那種味道來，不管是在出意見時，從事一項工作時，或者是錯誤被揭發時，我們雖然還披著稅吏的外袍，聲音卻是法利賽人的聲音：「神啊！我感謝你，我不像別人。」（路十八 11）

我們是否找得到這種謙卑的人——真正算自己比眾聖徒中最小的還小，視自己為眾人之僕呢？當然找得到。「愛是不自誇、不張狂、不求自己的益處。」當愛之靈滿溢心房，生出成熟而完全的屬天性情，柔和謙卑的羔羊（基督）真正成形在裏面時，便會生出完全之愛的能力，忘記自己，以祝福別人、包容他人、恭敬人為有福之事，不管那人是如何的卑微。這種愛一進來，神就進來了。當 神在祂的權能中進來，啓示祂自己是一切時，受造者就變作一無所有了；當受造者在 神面前變作一無所有時，就不得不對其他受造者表現出謙卑來。於是 神的同在不再是時有時無，乃覆庇全人，成為人永遠居住的所在，人在 神面前深深自卑的地位，成為 神彰顯其同在的聖所，一切的言語和事工皆由此而發。

願 神教導我們明白，我們對於同伴所發的思想、言語和感覺，都是我們向著他是否謙卑的一種考驗。而惟有在祂面前謙卑，才能使我們常常以謙卑的態度對待同伴。我們的謙卑必須是神的羔羊——內住的基督——的生命。

所有在講臺上傳講聖潔的教師們，和一切私下或公開聚集裏要追求聖潔的人，務要聽這警告：沒有一種驕傲像自覺聖潔的驕傲這般危險，因為沒有比它更詭詐、更狡猾的了。並非有人曾這樣說或甚至這樣想：「站開吧！我比你聖潔。」不，人確實都憎惡這種思想。然而在人的隱密處不知不覺間會培養出一種習慣來，為著他所得著的深覺自滿，不禁去跟別人比一比，而覺得自己比他們長進得多。這種情形不一定顯在特別維護自己的權利或自我讚賞的場合中，其實只要看見一個人失去深深自卑的態度就可以認出了，因為一個已看見 神榮耀的人，身上的標記正是深深地自卑（伯四十二 5、6；賽六 5）。這自卑不僅表現在言語和思想中，也會表現在談及別人的語調和說話方式中，而那些具有屬靈辨別力的人一定會認出其中己的權勢來，連世人銳利的眼睛也會注意到，並指出這是那些宣稱擁有屬天生命者，卻未結出任何特殊之屬天美果的明證。噢！弟兄們！要謹慎小心。當我們以為自己正邁向聖潔時，除非我們的謙卑也隨著長進，否則我們不過是以美麗的思想和感覺自娛，陶醉于奉獻與信心的嚴肅舉動裏，身上一直沒有與 神同在的唯一明確之標記——己的消失。來吧！讓我們逃到耶穌那裏，把自己隱藏在祂裏面，直到我們穿上了祂的謙卑——此乃我們唯一的聖潔。（慕安得烈）

謙卑與罪

在罪人中，我是個罪魁。(提前一 15)

人們常把謙卑和悔罪視為同一件事，因而繼續容許罪盤踞在人裏面，否則就無法助長謙卑似的。但我相信我們已明白這不叫謙卑，謙卑高過這種情形。我們已從主耶穌和使徒的教訓當中發現，有關這項德行的教誨通常與罪無關。就著萬物的本質、受造者與造物主的關係、耶穌的生命（活在地上的生命與祂所賜給我們的生命）而言，謙卑乃聖潔的真髓、蒙福的要素。謙卑是已遜位，使 神登寶座， 神成為一切，己則算不了什麼。

但縱使我覺得必須特別強調真理的這一面，我仍然不能不承認因著人的罪，使 神賜予聖徒謙卑之恩典，更顯出嶄新之深度與強烈對比。只須看一看使徒保羅這個蒙救贖的聖人，看看他如何深深地意識到自己曾是個罪人，而且終其一生無法磨滅此印象。我們都記得他提到自己是逼迫人的、褻瀆 神的那些經文：「我原是使徒中最小的，不配稱為使徒，因為我從前逼迫 神的教會。……我比眾使徒格外勞苦，這原不是我，乃是 神的恩與我同在。」(林前十五 9、10) 「我本來比眾聖徒中最小的還小，然而祂還賜我這恩典，叫我把基督那測不透的豐富傳給外邦人。」(弗三 8) 「我從前是褻瀆 神的、逼迫人的、侮慢人的；然而我還蒙了憐憫，因我是不信不明白的時候而作的。……基督降世為要拯救罪人，……在罪人中我是個罪魁。」(提前一 13、15) 神的恩典拯救了他， 神也永遠不再紀念他的罪愆，然而他卻永遠不能忘記過去所犯的大罪。當他愈因著 神的救恩而歡喜，愈經驗到 神的恩典而充滿說不出來的喜樂時，他愈清楚地意識到自己是個蒙拯救的罪人，而只有這種罪人的意識使救恩的意義與甘甜對他更顯寶貴、真實。他從沒有一刻忘記 神是把一個罪人抱在懷中，並用慈愛覆庇他。

剛才我們所引的經文常被人當作是保羅每日犯罪的懺悔文。其實一個人只消細讀上下文，就會發現根本不是這樣。這些經文具有更深遠的含意，而且指向永永遠遠，它們用深沉的語調訴說對 神的讚歎與仰慕，這正是俯伏於寶座前的蒙救贖者和罪蒙羔羊血洗淨者身上之謙卑的迴響。他們決不會成為別種人，永遠都是蒙救贖的罪人，即使在榮耀裏亦然；而 神的孩子在今生決不會有一刻完全活在祂愛的光中，除非他覺得「蒙救恩的罪人」是他唯一的地位與名份，使他有權利接受 神應許作在他身上的一切恩典。他先是以罪人的身份謙卑地來到 神面前，繼則發現作為一個受造者，謙卑的樣式本是合宜的，於是「謙卑」這名詞被賦予了新意義。再後，他一想起他是 神奇妙救贖大愛的標記，受造者的謙卑就發出深邃而豐滿的敬愛之情。

綜觀使徒保羅的基督徒生涯，會注意到一項顯著的事蹟，就是他的筆尖下從未透露出任何需要認罪的事，即使在書信中吐露個人最隱密的心事時亦然，這就使前述所引的經文所要表達的真義更為突出了。保羅從未提及任何缺陷或短處，也沒有一個地方暗示讀者他曾不盡責或違犯了完全之愛的律法。相反地，有不少章節表明他自己若不是在 神和人面前過無瑕疵的生活，則他所說的一切毫無意義。「我們向你們信主的人，是何等聖潔、公義、無可指摘，有你們作見證，也有 神作見證。」(帖前二 10) 「我們所誇的是自己的良心，見證我們藉著 神的聖潔和誠實在世為人，……向你們更是這樣。」(林後一 12) 他所說的不是一個理想或抱負，乃實實在在是他所過的生活。不管我們怎樣解釋他缺少認罪這件事，但大家都承認這些話指向一種伏於聖靈大能的生活，這是我們這個世代很少人明白而且也不敢奢望的。

我所要強調的重點乃是：缺少認罪這件事不過加強了一個事實，就是進入更深之謙卑的秘訣不是每日認罪，而是沒有一刻忘記自己的地位，已習慣站在當站的地位上，承認自己就是蒙 神恩典拯救的罪人，這是我們唯一的地位、唯一蒙福的地位、在 神面前不變的地位，要以此為最高的喜樂。而恩典愈大則此地位愈鮮活。

保羅對過去尚未蒙恩以前所犯的大罪有深刻的記憶，而目前一方面他自覺已脫離罪，一方面又一直記得罪惡那黑暗的隱藏權勢準備隨時入侵，只有藉著內住之基督的同在與大能方蒙保守。「在我裏頭，就是我肉體之中，沒有良善。」羅馬書七 18 這句話把肉體描述得淋漓盡致。而羅馬書八 2 提到榮耀的釋放：「賜生命聖靈的律在基督耶穌裏釋放了我，使我脫離罪和死的律了。」這不是消滅肉體或使肉體成聖，而是靠著聖靈制服身體的惡行，繼續不斷地得勝。正如健康驅逐疾病，光明消滅黑暗，生命征服死亡。照樣基督藉著聖靈的內住，成為人的健康、光明和生命。然而我們也同時覺悟到自己的軟弱無能與危機四伏的情況，遂對 神產生更單純的信靠。此種信心是藉著聖靈一瞬間和不間斷的運作而錘煉出來的，使人表現出單單靠 神恩典而活的謙卑，隨之而來的是最大的信心與喜樂。

前面引述保羅所寫的三段經文，都顯示出奇妙的恩典臨到保羅身上，使他每一時刻都覺得必須那麼謙卑低伏。 神的恩與他同在，使他能比其他所有的人更格外勞苦； 神賜他恩典，叫他把基督那測不透的豐富傳給外邦人；而且主的恩是格外豐盛，使他在基督耶穌裏有信心和愛心，這就是罪人所蒙受的恩典，成為他的性情與榮耀，並保守他如此強烈而鮮明地意識到自己是一度犯罪且易於犯罪的人。「罪在那裏顯多，恩典就更顯多了。」（羅五 20）這句話透露出恩典的本質就是要對付罪、除掉罪；愈豐富地經驗到 神的恩典，就愈強烈地意識到自己是個罪人，這是永遠不變的律。不是罪使人記起他是個罪人，乃是 神的恩典顯示並提醒人他是怎樣的一個罪人，而使他能保持真正的謙卑。不是罪，而是恩典，使我真知道自己是個罪人，也永遠不敢離開那最低下、最自卑之罪人的地位。

我恐怕有不少人企圖以強烈的自我譴責與痛罵自己，來追求自卑，結果卻傷痛地承認他們仍然和從前一樣沒有謙卑的靈、謙卑的心，以及與謙卑有連帶關係的恩慈、憐憫、溫柔、寬容等德行。即使在對己的憎嫌中，如果你多多注意己，就永遠不能脫離己。只有讓 神來啓示，不僅是藉著律法判定罪，而且要藉著恩典得釋放，人才會變得謙卑。律法使人感到害怕，惟有恩典能帶下美麗的謙卑，使謙卑成為人的第二天性與可喜之事。 神在聖潔中啓示祂的自己，並且在恩典中使人就近祂、認識祂，因而亞伯拉罕、雅各、約伯、以賽亞都在祂面前俯伏，低而又低。 神這位造物主要作一無所有之受造者的一切， 神這位救贖主在祂的恩典中，要成為充滿罪惡之罪人的全部，祂要我們等候祂、信靠祂、敬拜祂，使祂的同在漫溢全人，以致再無容納己的餘地。只有這樣， 神的應許才會應驗：「到那日……性情狂傲的都必屈膝，惟獨耶和華被尊崇。」（賽二 11）

當罪人蒙 神完全的光照，住在 神聖潔、救贖之大愛中，並經驗神聖大愛的豐滿內住，就不能不謙卑下來，而這愛是來自基督和聖靈。注意罪不會救你脫離己，惟有專一注視 神，才能從己得釋放。（慕安得烈）

HUMILITY AND HOLINESS

"Which say, Stand by yourself; for I am holier than you." Isa. 65:5

We hear a great deal of seekers after holiness and professors of holiness, of holiness teaching and holiness meetings. The blessed truths of holiness in Christ, and holiness by faith, are being emphasized as never before. The great test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain, is truth and life, will be whether it be manifest in the increasing humility it produces. In the creature, humility is the one thing needed to allow God's holiness to dwell in him and shine through him. In Jesus, the Holy One of God who makes us holy, a divine humility was the secret of His life and His death and His exaltation; the one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God and men which marks us. Humility is the bloom and the beauty of holiness.

The chief mark of counterfeit holiness is its lack of humility. Every seeker after holiness needs to be on his guard, lest unconsciously what was begun in the spirit be perfected in the flesh, and pride creep in where its presence is least expected. Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. There is no place or position so sacred but the Pharisee can enter there. Pride can lift its head in the very temple of God, and make His worship the scene of its self exaltation. Since the time Christ so exposed his pride, the Pharisee has put on the garb of the publican, and the confessor of deep sinfulness equally with the professor of the highest holiness, must be on the watch. Just when We are most anxious to have our heart the temple of God, we shall find the two men coming up to pray. And the publican will find that his danger is not from the Pharisee beside him, who despises him, but the Pharisee within who commends and exalts. In God's temple, when we think we are in the holiest of all, in the presence of His holiness, let us beware of pride. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

"God, I thank you, I am not as the rest of men, or even as this publican." It is in that which is just cause for thanksgiving, it is in the very thanksgiving which we render to God, it may be in the very confession that God has done it all, that self finds its cause of complacency. Yes, even when in the temple the language of penitence and trust in God's mercy alone is heard, the Pharisee may take up the note of praise, and in thanking God be congratulating himself. Pride can clothe itself in the garments of praise or of penitence. Even though the words, "I am not as the rest of men" are rejected and condemned, their spirit may too often be found in our feelings and language towards our fellow worshippers and fellow-men. Would you know if this really is so, just listen to the way in which Churches and Christians often speak of one another. How little of the meekness and gentleness of Jesus is to be seen. It is so little remembered that deep humility must be the keynote of what the servants of Jesus say of themselves or each other. Is there not many a Church or assembly of the saints, many a mission or convention, many a society or committee, even many a mission away in heathendom, where the harmony has been disturbed and the work of God hindered, because men who are counted saints have proved in touchiness and haste and impatience, in self-defense and self-assertion, in sharp judgments and unkind words, that they did not each reckon others better than themselves, and that their holiness has but little in it of the meekness of the saints? In their spiritual history men may have had times of great humbling and brokenness, but what a different thing this is from being clothed with humility, from having an humble spirit, from having that lowliness of mind in which each counts himself the servant of others, and so shows forth the very mind which was also in Jesus Christ

"Stand by; for I am holier than you!" What a parody on holiness! Jesus the Holy One is the humble One: the holiest will ever be the humblest. There is none holy but God: we have as much of holiness as we have of God. And according to what we have of God will be our real humility, because humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all. The holiest will be the humblest.

Alas! Though the bare-faced boasting Jew of the days of Isaiah is not often to be found, even our manners have taught us not to speak thus, how often his spirit is still seen, whether in the treatment of fellow saints or of the children of the world. In the spirit in which opinions are given, and work is undertaken, and faults are exposed, how often, though the garb be that of the publican, the voice is still that of the Pharisee: "O God, I thank You that I am not as other men."

And is there, then, such humility to be found, that men shall indeed still count themselves "less than the least of all saints," the servants of all? There is. "Love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, seeks not its own." Where the spirit of love is shed abroad in the heart, where the divine nature comes to a full birth where Christ the meek and lowly Lamb of God is truly formed within, there is given the power of a perfect love that forgets itself and finds its blessedness in blessing others, in bearing with them and honoring them, however feeble they be. Where this love enters, there God enters. And where God has entered in His power, and reveals Himself as All, there the creature becomes nothing. And where the creature becomes nothing before God; it cannot be anything but humble towards the fellow-creature. The presence of God becomes not a thing of times and seasons, but the covering under which the soul ever dwells, and its deep abasement before God becomes the holy place of His presence whence all its words and works proceed.

May God teach us that our thoughts and words and feelings concerning our fellowmen are His test of our humility towards Him, and that our humility before Him is the only power that can enable us to be always humble with our fellow- men. Our humility must be the life of Christ, the Lamb of God, within us.

Let all teachers of holiness, whether in the pulpit or on the platform, and all seekers after holiness, whether in the closet or the convention, take warning. There is no pride so dangerous, because none so subtle and insidious, as the pride of holiness. It is not that a man ever says, or even thinks, "Stand by; I am holier than you." No, indeed, the thought would be regarded with abhorrence. But there grows up, all unconsciously, a hidden habit of soul, which feels complacency its attainments, and cannot help seeing how far it is in advance of others. It can be recognized, not always in any special self-assertion or self-laudation, but simply in the absence of that deep self-abasement which cannot but be the mark of the soul that has seen the glory of God (Job 42: 5, 6; Isa.6: 5). It reveals itself, not only in words or thoughts, but in a tone, a way of speaking of others, in which those who have the gift of spiritual discernment cannot but recognize the power of self. Even the world with its keen eyes notices it, and points to it as a proof that the profession of a heavenly life does not bear any specially heavenly fruits. O brethren! let us beware. Unless we make, with each advance in what we think holiness, the increase of humility our study, we may find that we have been delighting in beautiful thoughts and feelings, in solemn acts of consecration and faith, while the only sure mark of the presence of God, the disappearance of self, was all the time wanting. Come and let us flee to Jesus, and hide ourselves in Him until we be clothed upon with His humility. That alone is our holiness. (Andrew Murray)

HUMILITY AND SIN

"Sinners, of whom I am chief."-1 Tim.1:15

Humility is often identified with penitence and contrition. As a consequence, there appears to be no way of fostering humility but by keeping the soul occupied with its sin. We have learned, I think, that humility is something else and something more. We have seen in the teaching of our Lord Jesus and the Epistles how often the virtue is inculcated without any reference to sin. In the very nature of things, in the whole relation of the creature to the Creator, in the life of Jesus as He lived it and imparts it to us, humility is the very essence of holiness as of blessedness. It is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. Where God is all, self is nothing.

But though it is this aspect of the truth I have felt it specially needful to press, I need scarce say what new depth and intensity man's sin and God's grace give to the humility of the saints. We have only to look at a man like the Apostle Paul, to see how, through his life as a ransomed and a holy man, the deep consciousness of having been a sinner lives inextinguishably. We all know the passages in which he refers to his life as a persecutor and blasphemer. "I am the least of the apostles, that am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God ...I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15: 9,10). "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the heathen" (Eph. 3:8). "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief ...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1. 13, 15). God's grace had saved him; God remembered his sins no more for ever; but never, never could he forget how terribly he had sinned. The more he rejoiced in God's salvation, and the more his experience of God's grace filled him with joy unspeakable, the clearer was his consciousness that he was a saved sinner, and that salvation had no meaning or sweetness except as the sense of his being a sinner made it precious and real to him. Never for a moment could he forget that it was a sinner God had taken up in His arms and crowned with His love.

The texts we have just quoted are often appealed to as Paul's confession of daily sinning. One has only to read them carefully in their connection, to see how little this is the case. They have a far deeper meaning, they refer to that which lasts throughout eternity, and which will give its deep undertone of amazement and adoration to the humility with which the ransomed bow before the throne, as those who have been washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb. Never, never, even in, glory, can they be other than ransomed sinners; never for a moment in this life can God's child live in the full light of His love, but as he feels that the sin, out of which he has been saved, is his one only right and title to all that grace has promised to do. The humility with which first he came as a sinner, acquires a new meaning when he learns how it becomes him as a creature. And then ever again, the humility, in which he was born as a creature, has its deepest, richest tones of adoration, in the memory of what it is to be a monument of God's wondrous redeeming love.

The true import of what these expressions of St. Paul teach us comes out all the more strongly when we notice the remarkable fact that, through his whole Christian course, we never find from his pen, even in those epistles in which we have the most intensely personal unbosomings, anything like confession of sin. Nowhere is there any mention of shortcoming or defect, nowhere any suggestion to his readers that he has failed in duty, or sinned against the law of perfect love. On the contrary, there are passages not a few in which he vindicates himself in language that means nothing if it does not appeal to a faultless life before God and men. "You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and righteously, and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you" (1 Thess. 2:10). "Our glorying is this, this testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward" (2 Cor. 1:12). This is not an ideal or an aspiration; it is an appeal to what his actual life had been. However we

may account for this absence of confession of sin, all will admit that it must point to a life in the power of the Holy Spirit, such as is but seldom realized or expected in these our days.

The point which I wish to emphasize is this--that the very fact of the absence of such confession of sinning only gives the more force to the truth that it is not in daily sinning that the secret of the deeper humility will be found, but in the habitual, never for a moment to be forgotten position, which just the more abundant grace will keep more distinctly alive, that our only place, the only place of blessing, our one abiding position before God, must be that of those whose highest joy it is to confess that they are sinners saved by grace.

With Paul's deep remembrance of having sinned so terribly in the past, ere grace had met him, and the consciousness of being kept from present sinning, there was ever coupled the abiding remembrance of the dark hidden power of sin ever ready to come in, and only kept out by the presence and power of the indwelling Christ. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing;" - these words of Rom. 7 describe the flesh as it is to the end. The glorious deliverance of Rom.8 - "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has now made me free from the law of sin, which once led me captive" - is neither the annihilation nor the sanctification of the flesh, but a continuous victory given by the Spirit as He mortifies the deeds of the body. As health expels disease, and light swallows up darkness, and life conquers death, the indwelling of Christ through the Spirit is the health and light life of the soul. But with this, the conviction of helplessness and danger ever tempers the faith in the and momentary and unbroken action of the Holy Spirit into that chastened sense of dependence which makes the highest faith and joy the handmaids of a humility that only lives by the grace of God.

The three passages above quoted all show that it was the wonderful grace bestowed upon Paul, and of which he felt the need every moment, that humbled him so deeply. The grace of God that was with him, and enabled him to labor more abundantly than they all; the grace to preach to the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ; the grace that was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, it was this grace of which it is the very nature and glory that it is for sinners, that kept the consciousness of his having once sinned, and being liable to sin, so intensely alive. "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." This reveals how the very essence of grace is to deal with and take away sin, and how it must ever be the more abundant the experience of grace, the more intense the consciousness of being a sinner. It is not sin, but God's grace showing a man and ever reminding him what a sinner he was, that, will keep him truly humble. It is not sin, but grace, that will make me indeed know myself sinner, and make the sinner's place of deepest self-abasement the place I never leave.

I fear that there are not a few who, by strong expressions of self-condemnation and self-denunciation, have sought to humble themselves, and have to confess with sorrow that a humble spirit, a "heart of humility," with its accompaniments of kindness and compassion, of meekness and forbearance, is still as far off as ever. Being occupied with self, even amid the deepest self-aborrence, can never free us from self. It is the revelation of God, not only by the law condemning sin but by His grace delivering from it, that will make us humble. The law may break the heart with fear; it is only grace that works that sweet humility which becomes a joy to the soul as its second nature. It was the revelation of God in His holiness, drawing nigh to make Himself known in His grace, that made Abraham and Jacob, Job and Isaiah, bow so low. It is the soul in which God the Creator, as the All of the creature in its nothingness, God the Redeemer in His grace, as the All of the sinner in his sinfulness, is waited for and trusted and worshipped, that will find itself so filled with His presence, that there will be no place for self. So alone can the promise be fulfilled: "The haughtiness of man shall be brought low, and the Lord alone be exalted in that day."

It is the sinner dwelling in the full light of God's holy, redeeming love, in the experience of that full indwelling of divine love, which comes through Christ and the Holy Spirit, who cannot but be humble. Not to be occupied with your sin, but to be occupied with God, brings deliverance from self. (Andrew Murray)