



**IDENTIFICATION
OF THE GODLY
AND THE
THREEFOLD MARVEL**

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“I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” Isa. 57:15.

Here we have a distinct, though brief, description of those whom the high and lofty One inhabits. Contrition and humility are the identifying marks of the particular characters in whom the Holy One tabernacles. That description applies to and is common to *all* the regenerate. “Him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” is not a delineation of a few exceptionally eminent saints who constitute a special class all to themselves, but depicts all who are truly saved. So far from those marks belonging only to certain highly favoured souls that have far out-stripped their fellows in spiritual attainments, they are found in every one who has been born again. That is clear from Romans 8:9-11: God indwells all the regenerate, for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” and compare Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:22.

Now if the reader will carefully and honestly examine himself in the mirror of the Word, he should have no difficulty in discovering whether or not those two features be stamped upon *him*. The Hebrew word for “contrite” means “bruised” or “beaten,” as an object that comes under the pestle or hammer. That at once reminds us of Jeremiah 23:29: “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” — fire in the conscience (Deut. 32:22), and a hammer on the heart. When God’s Word is applied in power, it convicts the sinner of his awful sinfulness; and when a crucified Christ is revealed to him, he mourns for his sins as one mourneth for his only son (Zech. 12:10). Contrition then is a feeling sense of the heinousness and loathsomeness of sin. It causes us to grieve over it with godly sorrow. If sin be hateful to you, if the

plague of your heart be your sorest grief, if you mourn over your corruptions, then you *have* a “contrite” spirit.

But it is rather upon the second of those marks we wish to dwell, for many of God’s little ones deprive themselves of legitimate assurance because of ignorance on this subject. An humble spirit or heart is an infallible sign of regeneration, for the unregenerate are proud, self complacent, self-righteous. Yet the very mention of the word “humility” seems to cut off many Christians. As they examine themselves, they discover so much pride at work within that they are quite unable to persuade themselves that *they* have an *humble* heart. It seems to them that it is one thing they most evidently lack. Now it will no doubt be a startling statement, but we unhesitatingly affirm that the great majority of God’s people are — not less — but far more humble than they suppose. That is a fact, and we propose to now furnish clear and full proof of the same, and in language which we trust the simplest will be able to grasp. Attend closely then to what follows.

First, that the Christian reader possesses an humble heart is plain from the fact that he confesses himself to be a *Hell-deserving sinner*. We do not have in mind what you think or say of yourself when in the company of your fellows, but rather what you feel and say of yourself when *alone with God*. Whatever pretences you are guilty of before men — and none of us can plead guiltless there, for we naturally want people to think well of us and are hurt if they do not — when in the presence of the Omniscient One, you are real, sincere, and genuine. Now, dear reader, be honest with yourself: When on your knees before the Throne of Grace, do you freely and frankly acknowledge that if you received your lawful due, you would — even now — be suffering the awful fires of Hell? If so, a miracle of grace must have been wrought within you. No unregenerate person will or can honestly make such a confession to God, for he does not feel he has done anything deserving of eternal punishment!

Second, if you own that all your righteousness are *as filthy rags*, that is proof you possess an humble heart. Of course, we

mean much more than your merely uttering those words as a parrot might, or even singing them during some religious service. We mean that when you are in the presence of *the Lord* — which is always the surest test — you personally realise that you have nothing whatever of your own to commend you to His favourable regard, that there is not a single meritorious deed standing to your credit *before Him*. We mean that, when bowed in His presence, in the calmness and quietness of your closet, you own without any qualification that your best performances are *defiled by sin* and that in yourself, you are a filthy pauper. If that be indeed your language before God, it most certainly issues from an humble heart. The heart of the natural man thinks and feels the very opposite, and can no more loathe himself than transform himself into a holy angel.

Third, if you receive everything in the Scriptures *as a little child*, that is another proof that a miracle of grace has been wrought within you and that you now possess an humble heart. By nature, we are “wise and prudent” in our own esteem. Whatever may have been our early training, however, we may have been taught to revere God’s Word, yet there was that in us which rose up in opposition to some of its teachings. Proud reason rebelled at the mysteries of creation, the virgin birth, the Trinity. The enmity of the carnal mind rose up against the sovereignty of God, making one vessel to honour and another to dishonour; against the spirituality and strictness of the Divine Law, which curses all who deviate the slightest from its holy demands; against the endless punishment of all dying out of Christ. But the regenerate, while there is much they do not understand, accept without murmur or question *all* that is revealed in the Word. *If you do*, that is proof that your pride has been abased before God.

Fourth, if you *mourn over the wretched returns* you make unto God, that is further evidence of an humble heart. Nor is that a point in any wise difficult to determine. There is no need for you to make a mystery out of it. You know whether you do or do not sorrow over the response you make unto God for all His goodness unto you. You know whether or not you feel you have ill requited

Him for the multitude of His favours and mercies. You know whether you do or do not grieve over the coldness of your heart in answer to His lovingkindness, the weakness of your faith in view of His promises, the feebleness — and perhaps the absence — of your praise and thanksgiving for His long-sufferance and faithfulness. If you *do* make conscience of these things, mourn over them, confess them — though not as feelingly as you ought — that is another proof of an humble heart. As it is faith, and not the strength of it, which saves; so it is such mourning, and not the depth of it, which evidences its spirituality.

Fifth, if you frankly *ascribe to God all the good* that is in you, then you have an humble heart. If you freely own that all your springs are in Him, that He has wrought all your works in you (Isa. 26:12), if you honestly *disclaim* any credit to yourself for any good thing, then your pride has been slain *before God* — and that is what most matters! If the language of your heart really be “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10), my “sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5), that He has worked in me both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), then most assuredly, your pride has been subdued. In such case, you will gladly unite in declaring, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psalm 115:1). You will take no credit for — nor should you deny the existence of — an humble heart, but will unhesitatingly give *God all* the honour and praise for it.

How thankful we should be that Scripture does not say, God dwells only in those who have complete victory over sin, or those who enjoy unbroken and unclouded communion with Him. Had those been the distinguishing features named, then every one of us might well despair — most certainly, they had excluded or “cut off” this writer. But we say again, a contrite and humble spirit takes in *every* regenerate soul. And if you, my reader, measuring yourself by what has been pointed out above, can discern such fruits and evidences of contrition and humility, then so far from its being presumptuous for you to look upon yourself as one saved and indwelt by God, it would be most wicked presumption for you to do otherwise.

The Threefold Marvel

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” Isa. 57:15.

It will at once be obvious to a spiritual mind that no human pen, however gifted, could begin to do justice to such a verse as this; rather is he likely to detract from its sublimity and depreciate its grandeur in the estimation of the reader. It is one of those outstanding declarations of Holy Writ which is stamped so unmistakably with the autograph of its Divine Author. The mind of the creature could not have invented it, for the thoughts of a fallen being would never soar to such heights, conceive of such an ineffable Object as is here presented to our view, nor have imagined such an amazing act on His part as here predicated of Him. As a whole, it exhibits a threefold marvel and miracle.

First, a marvel and miracle of *Divine condescension*, namely, that of the Highest and the lowest meeting together. Our estimation of the stupendous and amazing nature of this marvel will be proportioned by our concept of the greatness and majesty of the Lord God. Alas, that in our day, this is so little perceived even by the majority of those who profess to be His people. So little does the modern pulpit set forth the perfections of Deity; yea, so wretchedly is He caricatured, that He has good reason to say of those in the pew, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psa. 50:21): Feeble, fickle, compromising — unable to accomplish His purpose, swayed by the events of time, indifferent to sin. It is not, too, such to say that the God of Scripture is “THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:23) of modern Christendom. The “god” of the “churches” possesses scarcely any of the attributes of the living God, but is instead, a disgusting figment of their own perverted imagination and corrupt sentiments.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One” (Isa. 57:15), He is the One “who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust

of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?...Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing...All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa. 40:12-18). Pause, my reader, carefully ponder those words; and then ask yourself, "Is there not a real and pressing need for me to revise, yea, radically alter my concept of this mighty and majestic Being?" "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6).

The God of Scripture is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:15-16). If that were more clearly grasped by our minds, and if it more powerfully influenced our hearts, we should stand in awe of such an One, and in astonishment, exclaim with one of old, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth?" (1 Kings 8:27). Such was the wondering exclamation of Solomon upon the completion of the temple — probably the most remarkable and imposing building ever erected by man on this earth — the placing of all its sacred vessels in their proper places, and the dedication of the whole. For Jehovah to take up His abode therein seemed to him a thing incredible, impossible. Considering His immensity, he went on to say, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27).

The One whom the heavens are incapable of containing cannot be circumscribed in place nor held by space, being infinite and omnipresent. The Heaven is His throne and the earth is His "footstool" — shall then the King of glory occupy *that* for His seat! Can such an One take up His abode in a human heart? Surely such a thing is far beyond the widest stretch of

imagination. What! That He “who humbleth himself to [so much as] behold the things that are in heaven” (Psa. 113:6) should deign to tabernacle in a worm of the earth is utterly beyond comprehension. That He who is infinite should make His home in one that is finite had never been thought of by mortal mind. That He who “inhabiteth eternity” (Isa. 57:15) should indwell a creature of time, what is it but indeed a marvel and miracle of condescension — one which should bow us before Him in overwhelming wonderment and worship.

Yet Jehovah is not only the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, but “whose name is *Holy*” (Isa. 57:15): His very nature is ineffably pure. To His immaculate eyes, the heavens themselves are unclean (Job 15:15), “the stars are not pure in his sight” (Job 25:5). “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). If, then, it be a thing incredible for the great God to dwell on the earth, if it would be a thing comprehensible for Him to tabernacle in a finite creature of time — even if that creature were himself sinless — what shall it be for One who is infinitely Holy to dwell within one that is fallen, corrupt, and vile? That is indeed a marvel and miracle of grace — appreciated only in proportion as we apprehend *Who* He is and what *we* are! We read that “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid” (Isa. 11:6), and that is a miracle of nature; but for the Holy One to indwell a sinner is a miracle of miracles, the transcendent marvel of grace.

Yes, it is not only a marvel of condescension that the infinite God should indwell a finite creature, but it is also a miracle of *Divine mercy* that the ineffably Holy One should take up His abode in the heart of a fallen and sinful creature. Were it not that the Word of Truth clearly and repeatedly taught this, we had not dared to affirm it, nor even imagine such a wonder for ourselves. “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly” (Psa. 138:6). O that our hearts were duly affected by His peerless benignity. If they were, we should exclaim with the Psalmist, “Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in

heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people” (Psa. 113:5-8). The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10).

“I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15). That exhibits to us, third, a marvel and miracle of *Divine power*. By nature, there are none of “a contrite and humble spirit.” So far from it, all the fallen children of Adam are in love with sin and self. The world over, the unregenerate are intractable, impenitent, proud, and self-willed. It is only by the supernatural operations of Divine power that the wild are tamed, the stout-hearted made contrite, and the haughty become lowly. Above, we have said that the great God takes up His abode in a worm of the earth, yet it is not one considered as a “worm of the earth” that He does so. No, rather is it as one upon whom the Lord had set His heart from before the foundation of the world, as one redeemed by Christ and cleansed by His precious blood, as one who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, as one who has thrown down the weapons of his warfare and surrendered to the claims of God, as one who has been made a new creature by the might of Omnipotence. Wonder and adore at this threefold marvel and miracle.

