



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

8. "I've Had It With Humility"

How Jean lost her home because she played Creator.

Jean came from a distance to seek counsel. Her marriage was crumbling. Her husband was stepping out on her—everything was going wrong. She was confused, bewildered, heartbroken. As we visited together, several things came to light.

Jean had been unpopular in school from the very first grade. Her mother had dressed her in old-fashioned clothes. With her long hair and unusual shoes she looked very different from the rest. In spite of her protests, Mother insisted this was the way she would be dressed. This parent made Christianity a galling yoke in spite of the fact that Jesus said, "My yoke is easy."

When Jean reached academy, she took matters in her own hands and cut her hair, modernized her dress, and rebelled against some of the rules and regulations her parents had shackled her with. Although some of the rules had been good, others had been unreasonable. But Jean did not get along well in the academy either. She was not popular with the students, nor was she a good student. And at the end of her senior year she failed to meet college entrance requirements.

Discouraged confused, and with a feeling of rejection. Jean decided to leave home and go off to a distant city, where no one would know her, and start all over again. This she did, enrolling in a business college in her new environment. Then she felt she was being accepted for what she really was.

Without the influences of her home and friends. Jean found it easy to drift away from the life and standards she had always been taught. She left the Lord and found new friends outside the church. One of these was Paul, a handsome young man with many talents. To her amazement Jean found out that Paul, too, had at one time been a member of the church.

It wasn't long before they were married and set up housekeeping next to Paul's parents' home. My, what a wonderful time she was having. Everything was going great. It was fun, fun, fun! It seemed there was always somewhere to go and something to do.

But time has a way of bringing reality to light. It wasn't long before Jean's conscience bothered her about working on the Sabbath. Even though she was not now a member of the church, she realized the enormity of her sin against a Christ who had never been unkind to her. So she decided not to work on the Sabbath any longer and persuaded Paul to join her in this decision, but neither of them experienced a real conversion.

Paul had clean habits. He did not smoke or drink, although otherwise he was a backslider. Paul didn't like to go to church, and he salved his conscience by saying that he just didn't like the minister. Week by week

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they starved their spiritual nature by depriving themselves of the study of the Word of God and of fellowship in the church.

They both worked and began to do well financially. But they were lonely. Jean was naturally sensitive and easily hurt, so she didn't mix much with her work associates. She didn't visit with her parents because they were "religious fanatics." and she equated their extremism with her unpopularity in school days. Since she never had confided in her parents, she decided she now had a right to her own tears.

Jean didn't want a baby, just hobbies and a hubby. The years slipped by. Some were good, others not. After nine years, she realized that she was going to have a baby. She began to be excited to think that she would have someone with whom to share her time while Paul was away at work.

During this time Paul changed his job. His new job demanded his being away from home often for a week or more at a time. This bothered Jean. She even began to worry about his fidelity, but Paul assured her that he would be faithful. In spite of the fact that she tried to remind herself that Paul loved her, she became increasingly irritated in this new work situation, and her irritation showed every time Paul came home.

The days were long, and often Paul's mother, who lived next door, came over. She tried to guide Jean in her handling of the baby. It wasn't long before resentment began to build up toward Paul's mother, for Jean did not want anyone to tell her what to do.

She wanted just one thing, Paul must come back home and find work where he could be with her every evening. Jean became so upset that she began to have dizzy spells. She wept a lot. Poor Paul was torn between his loyalty to his employer and his love for his wife. As tensions mounted, Jean finally threatened to leave Paul if he didn't change his work. This caused Paul to stay away from home even more. He didn't want to come home to that morbid atmosphere and the stormy sessions that almost always followed.

When Paul was gone, his mother irritated Jean. When Paul came home, it was a constant battle over his work. Then one day Jean threw her wedding ring at Paul and cried, "There, take that! It doesn't mean anything to me anymore."

Paul retorted that he knew that and had known it for some time. He told her he didn't love her anymore either. "I should have left you before the baby was born!" Jean snapped back.

When Paul became infatuated with a young woman, Jean finally woke up and realized she was truly losing him. He was a talented musician, a good carpenter, a fine mechanic, and a splendid pilot. Besides these talents, he showed promise as a photographer and was recognized as an outstanding teacher. He was a hard worker and a good provider.

Jean became aware of what a fine man she was losing when Paul left on his next trip without kissing her good-bye. What was she going to do? She wanted to win him back. It was at this time that she came to see us, hoping we might give her some miraculous formula that would answer her growing problem.

Jean sat in our apartment and poured out her story. Then we began to exchange ideas. Among other things we suggested that she might wish to study the law of the "third horizontal level down" as suggested by the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:3. It says, "Let each esteem other better than themselves." This would mean that she look up to Paul instead of looking down on him. This would help to make him feel at ease in her presence.

Jean's eye brightened as she said. "You know, I didn't realize that that's what I've been doing, looking down on him. That's where I've missed the boat!"

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Then we explained further to Jean the Bible doctrine of humility. It finds its basis in the fact of history—the life and death of Jesus Christ. Because He loved us, He helped us to feel at ease in His presence.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.

Praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we began to share with Jean the secret of reconciliation.

"Could it be Paul doesn't feel at ease in your presence, Jean, for two reasons: a lack of freedom of his own choice, and a lack of humility on your part? Could it be that, unconsciously, you have tried to choose his job for him? When he didn't concur with your choice, you attacked his character. Expressions which belittle Paul make him feel ill at ease in your presence."

We kindly reminded Jean how she felt when her mother-in-law tried to tell her where she was not doing things right. "You wished she would stay away, didn't you?" we said.

"Yes, I guess I did," Jean said, her eyes filling with tears.

"No one wants to be told what to do or how unworthy he is," we continued. "One of the basic needs of the human heart is to be loved and accepted, to have a sense of belonging. You needed this in school. You suffered from its lack. In an attempt to get it you rebelled against your parents' wishes and cut your hair and changed your appearance. You felt uncomfortable in their house and wanted to get away from their holier-than-thou attitudes.

"You attempted to forget your past by enrolling in a business college where no one knew of your past unpopularity or anything else about you. You longed for acceptance. This is a perfectly natural feeling and a necessary one. And this is why you clung so tenaciously to Paul and wrapped your life around him. You needed the security he could offer—an experience you had never known. But could it be, Jean," we went on, "that little remarks which belittled Paul, play a part in the pending separation?"

Jean began to see herself and realized the situation in a new light. We began to develop the idea that the law of humility was one of the keys to her successful retrieval of her husband. We endeavored, with God's help, to paint a picture with scriptural foundation of the joy of following God's plan of esteeming our partner and neighbor better than ourselves. Jean was quick to see the reasonableness of it all and where, perhaps, she had failed.

"I can see now, Pastor Coon," she said, "where I've been terribly wrong. I know now why Paul said to me the other day, 'You think I'm a sinner, don't you?' He felt I was looking down on him. I broke the law of humility. Not long ago he said, 'How do you think it feels to be constantly doubted and questioned? You never approve of anything I do. In fact, you make it obvious that you don't love me.' I'm sorry I made him feel this way. I've made him miserable every time he wanted to do something I didn't feel he should. He said to me just last night. 'I helped you when you had trouble, but you don't seem to care about me—you're interested only in yourself.' "

"It's easy to lose sight of our partner's problems and focus on our own," we suggested, "We've all been guilty of it. The important thing now is to realize it and ask the Lord to help us change."

"I've been on the holier-than-thou level," Jean admitted. "I've told Paul, 'I wonder just how much you believe in God. Your actions sure don't show it.' I know, too, that I've said, 'You don't know how close I came to leaving you before the baby came. Why don't you wake up before it's too late.' I didn't realize the effect these words were having on Paul. I've been operating on the wrong level, but I shall mend my ways."

How many of us are guilty of the same offense? Philippians 2:3 clearly states that we ought to esteem others better than ourselves. Most often one wants to protect himself by attacking his partner.

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Every such statement had tended to make Paul feel more ill at ease in Jean's presence. Every such expression had widened a breach already begun. Had Jean's parents taught her the art of humility, love, and kindness, it would have meant far more to her than the long braided hair and the unbecoming dress. In fact, this character of humility is one of the first laws which the Sabbath keeping Christian should learn.

"The first thing to be learned by all who would be workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust." But Jean distrusted Paul and was now suffering intensely as a result.

The first angel of Revelation 14, verses 6 and 7, calls on the inhabitants of the earth to worship the Maker of heaven and earth. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

We may desist from work on the Sabbath day, but unless we distrust ourselves to the place where we can place our confidence and trust in Jesus, we cannot in reality worship Him in spirit and in truth. We should speak of our trust and confidence in others.

Paul needed words of confidence from a heart of love. For one to realize one's own creatureliness is to cease these holier-than-thou remarks about others. How inconsistent it is for a true worshiper of the Creator to take on a self-righteous air! Of all the people in the world, Sabbath keepers should be the most humble because of a realization of the greatness of Christ our Creator and the creatureliness of self.

Had Jean's father and mother taken the attitude of humility, something wonderful might have happened to Jean in her early years. Fanaticism does strange things. It often confuses the individual to such an extent that he loses his sense of security. In fact, it is the lack of security in Jesus Christ that breeds fanaticism in the first place. Much emphasis is placed on a particular area of activity to the neglect of others. Jean had never found her security in Jesus. She had never felt that Jesus loved her and that in Him she might have complete acceptance.

Complete acceptance! Oh, how He wants us to know this!

Notice God's words in Isaiah 57:15: "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, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

But some may say, "Yes, I see that God dwells with the one who is humble, but where does love and a sense of acceptance come in?"

Here it is: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." 1 John 4:19. So true love is willing and ready to humble itself in an effort to salvage another heart and build its hope. This humbling of ourselves before God and man does not detract from human dignity, but it brings the high and lofty God into our hearts. And with Him comes love, acceptance, and all that the human heart needs.

Jean needed all of these as we all do. Her parents chose extreme, fanatical ideals instead of love and humility, and in doing so they greatly damaged their own daughter. They set up a loneliness in her heart that caused her to demand an unreasonable security from her husband. Because he did not know how to open his heart to Jesus, he became confused over Jean's demands and finally decided he had had enough.

Then instead of Jean's winning him back through humble love she made unfortunate statements which widened the breach. She was unable to give love, for she could not give that which she did not possess. "He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love." 1 John 4:8.

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Man, a worshiper, comes to his Maker like an empty vessel. His Maker sheds abroad the love of God. So you see, love comes through humility. "And we love . . . because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19.

Down on our knees we all must go.
Then in our hearts God's love will flow.
Thus we dispense to others, too.
Infinite love, so deep and true.

As we neared the end of our interview, Jean determined to go home and put into practice the things she had learned. "I believe the Lord will help me," she stated, "and I am willing to follow your counsel. I know it is of the Lord."

We wished her the Lord's blessing and had prayer together before she left. Several days later Jean returned. Although it took two hours to make the trip, she was glad to take the time. In fact, she was walking on air! What a wonderful change had taken place! It was like a little bit of heaven. Her face looked bright, and she spoke with clarity. Her eyes sparkled as she rehearsed the events of the past week. Paul was beginning to be his old self again. And although she didn't find it an easy matter to be humble and kind, she was experiencing thrilling dividends.

Jesus said at one time, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:37.

Jean's new vocabulary came from a new heart. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34.

Humility is the law of the "Third Horizontal level down." Philippians 2:5-9 indicates that Jesus Christ is very God. His is the highest and first level. He humbled Himself and took on the form of man. He took an immense step down. God should be on the highest level in our thinking. Our fellowman should be on a level between God and us. And we should be on the third level in our attitude. Jesus Himself conveyed this attitude. He gave first allegiance to His Father; then He cared about the needs of others: He gave concern for His own needs last.

Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." To feel our creatureliness is true Sabbath humility.

Humility, then, is one of the very first, and one of the finest characteristics of a true worshiper. 'This must be—will be—revealed in our words and actions as well as in our dress. There is no point to our dressing so as to give a holier-than-thou attitude, nor is there any point in allowing words to flow from our lips that condemn and cut another. When we do this, we show how far short we come from meeting the divine plan. It is an inconsistency that the whole world can see, and it brings only reproach to Christ and His church.

Jean was experiencing the blessings of the Lord. She was realizing what others, too, have found—that joy comes in esteeming others better than ourselves. As we "honour all *men*," we demonstrate Christian humility. But it wasn't easy for Jean to be humble and selfless. It was a daily cross to bear, a daily battle. But it was producing marvelous results.

A few weeks later, however, we received a letter from Jean that disturbed both my wife and me. We read it, and almost wept, for we could see the consequences. It seems that a Christian teacher had observed Jean's new attitude and saw what she was doing. It evidently didn't meet his approval, and so he took Jean aside and talked with her. This prompted her to write to us. In the letter she stated, "I have talked with a Christian worker, and he says that such humility on my part is entirely unnecessary. And more than this, I'm tired of this approach in solving my marital problems."

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We felt sick at heart. Is there ever a time when we should be "tired of being humble," and yet expect God to effect solutions? We thought of the heartache Jean had suffered and the progress she was making. We pictured in our minds the happiness that she and Paul were now beginning to experience and the blessing they in turn could be to others in similar difficulty. But poor Jean, backed up by a fellow 'Christian', wanted no more of the Lord's plan.

It wasn't a complete shock, then, when later we learned that the favorable trend that had started reversed itself. Once more Jean and Paul quarreled and fussed. Finally, according to the latest report, Paul had left, and Jean had little hope of his return.

Tragic, isn't it? A continued program of humility on her part might have been used of God to prepare Paul to receive a tremendous solution. God promises, "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, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15.

Humility always brings rich rewards. Its dividends are fabulous. This is part of the philosophy of the Lord of the Lord's day.

How are things in your home, your church, your neighborhood? Could they be improved by your taking the third horizontal level down? Why not try it and see? Remember, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and he "that exalteth himself shall be abased." Luke 14:11.

Will you offer this prayer?

Dear Father in heaven. Thou hast commanded me to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself. and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Philippians 2:5-9.

Thou hast also declared that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." I come humbly at Thy feet. asking that Thou wilt "create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Believingly and yet unworthily I accept this new attitude hour by hour in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reflection: In concluding this chapter with the sad downfall of a home that might have been restored. we suggest that you review the seven great Bible facts. Then alone or in your prayer circle seek from Christ a renewal in your life of a humble attitude.

Seven Great Bible Facts:

1. A most vital lesson always to bear in mind as we observe the command, "Remember the sabbath day. to keep it holy. . . . The Lord made heaven and earth," is to accept our creatureliness. We must cry out with the psalmist. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Exodus 20:8-11: Psalm 8:3, 4).

2. Especially should we be thus humble, in view of the fact that the wonderful dominion man once had has been sacrificed to Satan "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:" Psalm 8:5, 6: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12.

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3. Christ has come to set us free from the bondage of sin and Satan "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15).

4. In this new freedom we are to "let this mind be in "us" which was also in Christ Jesus" who came from the highest level in the universe down to man's level; yea. even to the despised servant level "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:5-8.

5. This Christ-like attitude within us creates the miracle of our esteeming others better than ourselves "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3.

6. Only as this creaturely attitude is maintained can the Creator continue to dwell in our heart. "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, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15.

7. The result of self-exaltation is self-failure, for he that "exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 18:14).