

Pouring Contempt on Pride



Isaac Watts

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Long ago, 1707 to be precise, well-known hymn writer Isaac Watts penned words to remind man of the cross of Jesus and encouraging all to examine their own hearts. In the hymn, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, he used a phrase that should be given more attention: “and pour contempt on all my pride.” How often does anyone really think about the implications of that statement?

To be like Jesus, we must empty ourselves of pride.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ...” (**Philippians 2:5**). This introduces a very powerful lesson on the humility of Jesus. Pride must become contemptible to us if we are to be like Jesus.

Jesus had no reason for pride in his birth. In the eyes of many people, He must have been considered illegitimate. He was born in most humble circumstances of a woman whose husband was not a king of Israel but just a carpenter (**Mark 6:3**). Jesus never would have claimed any favor because of the conditions of birth as the world viewed it. Nearly all of us can claim a more advantaged beginning, but none of us are of such high birth that we have any reason to be proud.

Jesus had no reason to feel any pride because of his position in life. His home town, Nazareth, was considered to be nothing special. It was just a small, poor place. When Jesus had grown to manhood, he had no wealth. “*The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*” (**Luke 9:58**). Men are prone to feel high and mighty if they are from some famous place or if they are wealthy. However, to have the mind of Christ, we must pour contempt on pride.

Not only did Christ have no reason for pride in His birth and in His position in life, But He also had no reason for pride in His person. He was not known because of His great physique like King Saul nor for His good looks as was King David. Isaiah spoke of Him: “*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him*” (**Isaiah 53:2-3**).

Jesus did not take pride in His reputation, either. Not that Jesus did anything to damage His earthly reputation, but He realized that the people around Him had assigned Him a poor reputation. People called him a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners (**Matthew 11:19**). Those of us who may feel proud because of our looks or because of our popular place in life need to remember that this was not the mind that Jesus had.

Jesus had no reason for pride in the rank which was His from the earthly standpoint. His rank was that of a servant. He said of Himself: “*I am among you as the one who serves*” (**Luke 22:27**). He was not even recognized by the very people He came to serve. He said that He came to His own and His own received Him not (**John 1:11**). Even His brethren in the flesh did not believe in

Him (**John 7:5**). To further show His lowly position, He received sinners and ate with them. So far as rank in this life was concerned, Jesus was a nobody.

Jesus had contempt for pride. So much so, that He was willing to come to this earth and give Himself up to a death, not only agonizing but humiliating and undeserved. That is the cross “on which the Prince of glory died.” When we survey the wondrous cross, do we see the “sorrow and love flow mingled down”? Can we truly sing, as Mr. Watts wrote, “My richest gain I count but loss”?

Do we really understand “contempt”? Simply defined, to hold something in “contempt” is to think of it as beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn. Do we feel that way about our undeserved pride? Do we really have the mind of Christ? What do we see when we “survey the wondrous cross”? Christians point to Christ as their leader in an otherwise dark world. We talk about walking in His footsteps and we commit ourselves to follow Him in all things. Why should any of us be filled with pride? We cannot be this way and be like Jesus. Pour contempt on all your pride.