

Exploring the Elements of Courtesy

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: 1 Peter 3:8 Finally, [be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous:

Do we know what courtesy is? Where are we going to find a perfect display of courtesy? We are told that we are to behold the glory of God, and that by beholding we will be changed. We are called to behold the character of God. He, the Majesty of heaven, has a character that we need to behold so that we will be changed into that same character, from character to character, *from to glory to glory*. So this is the place where we need to study to understand the elements of true courtesy, if we are going to fulfill that word which tells us that we should be *courteous*; courteous towards one another, courteous to the unbelieving world around us. But according to the scripture above, it is particularly in reference to each other that we should exercise this.

1 Peter 3:8 ...[be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous:

This is specifically speaking to brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ. So He, the Majesty of heaven, must demonstrate to us what true courtesy is. Here we study again the wonderful subject of the atonement where it is all displayed. We look at Him and contemplate Him here:

Philippians 2:7 But [he] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Here is a study which contains the elements of true courtesy. He met us in our sinful condition and *made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant*. And finding himself in the likeness of man, He, as a man amongst us, *humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. Who is He? The Majesty of heaven, He who is the ruler over the whole universe. And here is this little speck of dust in the universe, and He shows His character, what He is really like, in this description. Let this percolate in your mind.

In contemplating the incarnation of Christ in humanity, we stand baffled before an unfathomable mystery, that the human mind cannot comprehend. The more we reflect upon it, the more amazing does it appear. How wide is

the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one. It is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in humanity, we look upon God, and see in Him the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. {5BC 1130.5}

God, who cannot be seen by sinful eyes, has manifested Himself in the incarnation of Christ. Here lies something to try and comprehend, especially in our endeavor to learn the elements of courtesy. Can you already see where we are going? Courtesy – the Majesty of the universe becoming a baby because we are so marred by sin. Let us appreciate the experience of the incarnation which was introduced in Philippians.

True Courtesy

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 10 For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [are] all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Not ashamed to call whom brethren? Those who believe in Him but are sinners, those in whom we can see many faults and flaws. He became at one with them and was not ashamed to call them brethren,

Hebrews 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;

He, the Majesty of heaven. dealt with sinners in a way that is so different to what we would imagine. He dealt with them in courtesy. We need to explore this. He is not ashamed to call us brethren, though we are so faulty. He calls faulty sinners like you and me *brethren*. Isn't that a courteous expression? "My brother." He could have said, You poor sinner. But no; He says *brethren*.

How does it make you feel when you know your sinfulness and He calls you brethren? And then, consider His ongoing tenderness and gentleness and kind, courteous deportment toward these brethren.

He voluntarily assumed human nature. It was His own act, and by His own consent. He clothed His divinity with humanity. {5BC 1126.8}

If He had come in an uncourteous manner, how would He have come? He would have blown us over with His glory. But He was so courteous to sinners such as you and I, who would perish at seeing Him in His glory, that He came along and veiled it.

He veiled the demonstrations of Deity, which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration, of the universe of God. He was God while upon earth, but He divested Himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man. He walked the earth as a man. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He laid aside His glory and His majesty. He was God, but the glories of the form of God He for a while relinquished. Though He walked among men in poverty, scattering His blessings wherever He went, at His word legions of angels would surround their Redeemer, and do Him homage. But He walked the earth unrecognized, unconfessed, with but few exceptions, by His creatures. The atmosphere was polluted with sin and curses, in place of the anthem of praise. His lot was poverty and humiliation. As He passed to and fro upon His mission of mercy to relieve the sick, to lift up the depressed, scarce a solitary voice called Him blessed, and the very greatest of the nation passed Him by with disdain. {Ibid.}

Contrast this with the riches of glory, the wealth of praise pouring forth from immortal tongues, {5BC 1127.1}

We are studying the true elements of the character of God in His courteous manner. As we study the nature of the atonement and we explore this unfathomable story – that He, the Majesty of the universe, became a baby, and as a child grew up and learned the unpleasant experiences and was made perfect through suffering – what a meditation this is. It's not just a study to prove, as we often use it, that Jesus truly was God and man, to prove the subject of the atonement. No; this is something that, once we have proven it to be true, we are to contemplate and to let form within our minds and hearts a change. We are beholding His glory.

He was God, but the glories of the form of God He for a while relinquished. Though He walked among men in poverty, scattering His blessings wherever

He went, at His word legions of angels would surround their Redeemer, and do Him homage. {5BC 1126.8}

He presents before us His two natures, divine and human. Here is the description of the divine: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He was "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." {5BC 1126.7}

This connection of the great glory of the Majesty of the universe with the human sinful race is really something to let the mind dwell upon and wonder. The courteous deportment continues to unfold to our mind's eye:

Jesus was the Commander of heaven, one equal with God, and yet He condescended to lay aside His kingly crown, His royal robe, and clothed His divinity with humanity. The incarnation of Christ in human flesh is a mystery. {5BC 1130.8}

It is something that is explained, but it's mysterious to the mind – "how can this be?"

He could have come to earth as one with a remarkable appearance, unlike the sons of men. His countenance could have shone with glory, and His form could have been of remarkable grace. He could have presented such an appearance as to charm the beholder; but this was not according to the plan devised in the courts of God. He was to bear the characteristics of the human family, and the Jewish race. In all respects the Son of God was to wear the same features as did other human beings. He was not to have such beauty of person as would make Him singular among men. He was to manifest no wonderful charms by which to attract attention to Himself. He came as a representative of the human family before heaven and earth. He was to stand as man's substitute and surety. He was to live the life of humanity in such a way as to contradict the assertion that Satan had made that humanity was his everlasting possession, and that God Himself could not take man out of His adversary's hands. {*Ibid.*}

Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. {5BC 1131.1}

Having contemplated the fact that Jesus, the Majesty of the universe, laid all that aside and became a human being, and did not display His glory to dazzle us, we see that He did it for a purpose – to demonstrate to us God's character; because otherwise we would *not have endured the sight*.

The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. Humanity could not have endured the presence of one of the pure, bright angels from glory; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men. {Ibid.}

This vision of the story of the atonement is there to penetrate us, to penetrate our minds and make us learn of God's character. When we have some great discovery and some high opinion of ourselves, we are prone to be uncourteous; we are prone to let the people have it. We are prone to let them see that we know better than they. We are prone to display something that turns the attention to myself. But God did not do that. He was so courteous that He didn't bowl us over by His glory.

So He comes to humanity like that, and He would hope that maybe they would recognise Him in His lovely, courteous way. But what happens? He comes to His own, and how do they receive Him?

Courteously Knocking

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

He came like that at the risk of not being recognised. He knew that. God knows everything. But in trying to help us He could not enforce upon us the reality of His glory. It had to be in the way that He did it. He was very courteous.

And how is it today with His own children in the period of Laodicea? Do they recognise Him now? He is speaking to them in Revelation, and He tells them quite plainly: You think you are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. He then describes their condition, and we recognise that this is our condition, the condition of God's people in these last days. And how does He meet us?

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:

He, God, who became a man, has already discovered to us His humility; and now, wishing that they would respond to Him, He knocks. He could have bowled us over again with the description of our terrible state, and said, Now, look here, take Me; I'm here to help you. But no; courteously He says, Can I come in? Doesn't that cause your heart to tremble with a discovery of love? "I'm not worthy." But in His kindness He is just knocking courteously, He, the Creator, who owns you and me, by creation and redemption. How do we feel towards someone we believe we own? We see it in humanity – how humanity

treated the slaves. Or we see it in persons who have a higher position in a working environment. How many treat in an uncourteous manner the people that they believe are theirs. And we come to church and how many times in the church we think, Well, we're brethren, let's talk to each other as we like. We see faulty characteristics in the church, and how do we handle them? Jesus knocks courteously, He who owns us. He cannot enforce Himself at all. That is His nature. He came and He didn't take over. Ponder this amazing mentality, realising who He is:

Acts 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Your mind is carried into this amazing scene of heaven, which is all different to earth.

Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

The very fact that I'm alive is due to Him.

Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being;

The fact that I am alive is because He gives me my breath; He keeps my heart beating. He owns me, doesn't He? He could just withdraw all that and I'm gone. But this person in whom I live and move and have my being, comes to me in my deplorable condition, and stands at the door, and says, May I come in? Doesn't make any sense to human ideas, does it? He already dwells in me by giving me life; but there is something there that must let Him in – the spiritual mind must let Him in. And He doesn't force Himself, even though He could, right from within us. Instead He says, Will *you* let Me in? Here is the element of true courtesy. So I don't need to take you through the delineations of courtesy according to the descriptions of what man would teach. I am looking at Jesus, and as we, under the Spirit of God, are looking at this story, the atonement of Jesus, we are there to comprehend its bearing upon our life. Can we not see the delineations of courtesy? It is all in God. Gazing and exploring His overtures of love to us, we learn the elements of courtesy.

Blush for Shame

In consideration of this, can men have one particle of exaltation? {5BC 1127.5}

There is no exaltation at all if you really consider the depth of this. We will be totally humble.

As they trace down the life and sufferings and humiliation of Christ, can they lift their proud heads as if they were to bear no trials, no shame, no humiliation? {Ibid.}

How we treat each other will be affected by this.

I say to the followers of Christ, Look to Calvary, and blush for shame at your self-important ideas. All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower and lower in His humiliation, until there were no lower depths that He could reach, in order to lift man up from his moral defilement. All this was for you who are striving for the supremacy--striving for human praise, for human exaltation; you who are afraid you will not receive all that deference, that respect from human minds, that you think is your due. Is this Christlike? {Ibid.}

He deserved everything, but He didn't come for that. He simply wanted to reach us by displaying His wonderful character to us, to save us.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He died to make an atonement, and to become a pattern for every one who would be His disciple. {5BC 1128.1}

This is what He came for, to show us a pattern.

Shall selfishness come into your hearts? {Ibid.}

You want to examine how selfishness is displayed.

And will those who set not before them the pattern, Jesus, extol your merits? You have none except as they come through Jesus Christ. Shall pride be harbored after you have seen Deity humbling Himself, and then as man debasing Himself, till there was no lower point to which He could descend? "Be astonished, O ye heavens," and be amazed, ye inhabitants of the earth, that such returns should be made to our Lord! What contempt! what wickedness! what formality! what pride! what efforts made to lift up man and glorify self, when the Lord of glory humbled Himself, agonized, and died the shameful death upon the cross in our behalf! {Ibid.}

If I want to change and become courteous, haven't I got the lesson before me? He is the pattern. To receive acknowledgment from others around you is not Christlike. To just humbly do what you have to do, as Jesus did, without any desire to be recognised, that is the Christlike thing. That was His attitude. He had a desire that He would be recognised to save us, but not that He would be looked upon as someone special. He just wanted to save us, to give us an example, so that my pride, my human uncourteous manners, would be unveiled before me when I look at Him like that. Do we now understand the meaning of the injunction in Peter?

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, [be ye] all of one mind,

What? *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Be ye all of one mind,*

1 Peter 3:8 ...having compassion one of another,

That was the mind of Christ. When we see each other's flaws, mistakes, and sins, we are to have compassion one for another.

1 Peter 3:8 ...love as brethren,

Jesus said He is not ashamed to call us brethren. *Love as brethren.*

1 Peter 3:8 ...[be] pitiful, [be] courteous:

Here is the meaning – as we contemplate Jesus. Although He was the Majesty of the universe, He was not ashamed to call them brethren. What a courtesy. Not ashamed, even though we were so sinful. *Be pitiful*, as God was; *be courteous*, as God is. As you look at the world around you, with all that is going on at the moment, wouldn't you like to go out there and shake them? especially when this decision is being made in government that same sex marriage should be made legal. How can you ever make such a decision? Can we respond in the way of "wake up, you people!" to shake them? How does God respond? It grieves Him. But He still holds back, because there are still some to save. God sees much more than we see. God sees all the corruptions. I once stood on a hill in Auckland, one of the extinct volcanoes in New Zealand, and I looked down upon the city at night time. The Lord came very close to me: See all those houses? I can see right into them, and I know what is going on in each house. He knows everything; and yet what is He like? The church – He knows everything. With all the wrongs and all the failures and all the wrong doctrines that have been going on and creeping into the church – He knows it all. But what does He say to the Laodiceans? "I stand at the door, and knock; I want to come and help you out of this."

Shall We Call for Fire to Come Down?

The reason for reading the Bible is not just to prove doctrine. It is there to cause us to meditate and let the truth penetrate and change our character.

Luke 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw [this], they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save [them]. And they went to another village.

Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of – It's so easy for us to study those things about the pouring out of God's wrath, and then to see God burning up Sodom and Gomorrah, and to look at it from our own human reasoning. This is why the disciples said this. "Look, they're rejecting you; shall we call for fire to come down?" This is the same mentality that we fall into ourselves, where we say, These people are justly deserving the punishment of God. But He says, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. When God destroys, it is the self-destruction of man's own actions against God's perfect way. God is not of the spirit to go along and destroy and send the fire down. But the fire came, and the destruction took place. It is a totally different mind-set when we study God. And this is the mind-set that we are to receive.

Have you received the lesson of courtesy? Can we be uncourteous one to another if we are truly beholding the truth of Jesus in the atonement? When we think we can go along and let each other know how we feel about them, is that courtesy? Jesus could have done it; but He was courteous. Can we press together in the spirit of this atonement? The body of Christ needs to represent His spirit. When the time comes when we are persecuted, we need to have reached a condition that Jesus had – no self to respond.

Our Message and Motivation

Our existence as a people, as a body, needs to be continually motivated by the meditations of this message. This is my desire that we live by these precious words:

Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. Now we have a message, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Will not our church members keep their eyes fixed on a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered? This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer. If we can awaken an interest in men's minds that will cause them to fix their eyes on Christ, we may step aside, and ask them only to continue to fix their eyes upon the Lamb of God. They thus receive their lesson. Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. He whose eyes are fixed on Jesus will leave all. He will die to selfishness. He will believe in all the Word of God, which is so gloriously and wonderfully exalted in Christ. {6BC 1113.1}

As the sinner sees Jesus as He is, an all compassionate Saviour, hope and assurance take possession of his soul. The helpless soul is cast without any reservation upon Jesus. None can bear away from the vision of Christ Jesus crucified a lingering doubt. Unbelief is gone. {6BC 1113.2}

The cross of Calvary challenges, and will finally vanquish every earthly and hellish power. In the cross all influence centers, and from it all influence goes forth. It is the great center of attraction; for on it Christ gave up His life for the human race. This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection. {6BC 1113.3}

We want to become perfect, to become like Christ? Here it is. This study is but a small segment of what we continually have to look at.

This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection. Yea, more, it was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror. {Ibid.}

Do we need to be conquerors? Do we need to be like Jesus in character? Here is how it happens: when we engage in this, not only to prove the truth, but to meditate and let its enormity take root in our hearts so that it will change our whole fabric of thinking and make us as God wants us to be. The focus here was on courtesy, but then all those other things will also become clear to us.

It is my prayer that we will continue to recognise that this is what we are about as a company. We are not here to enter into debate and discussion of who is right and who is wrong, but to ponder Jesus Christ and become like Him. May God help us to this end.

Amen.