

New Covenant Priesthood (Part 6)

Prayer and Humility

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I believe Luke 17 and Luke 18 teach that there is a linkage between faith, faithfulness, thanksgiving, prayer, and humility. They are foundational to our making it successfully through this way of life that God has called us into, and fulfilling our responsibilities as a priest. Each of these individually works to help keep our lives focused on God and His purpose, and away from self-centered patterns [so easily followed by human nature]. Each works to build the kind of mind acceptable for the Kingdom of God.

Faith is by far the most important, because it is foundational to everything else. Without faith it is utterly impossible to please God. Closely following it [in, at least, my hierarchical values] is humility. Jesus calls it, in Matthew 5: 3 - being "poor in spirit." Recognition of our spiritual bankruptcy [which puts us in great need] must include *acting* on our understanding through submission to God's will. True humility thus includes both the attitude and the act of submission. Their fruit is faithfulness: a conscientious, reliable, thorough and constant performance of duty.

In the last sermon, we also saw, that even the faithful performance of duty *never* puts God in debt to us. Regardless of what He calls upon us to do, we are still only doing our duty. It is we who owe Him everything. We are indebted to Him, because if He did not do what *He* does, we would never be in a position to perform even the lowest and most minor service in His behalf. This must be understood as the foundation of our relationship with Him. It puts the relationship on the right basis.

God is Creator. He is the potter. He is working out His designed purpose. We are the created clay being formed [along with others] to His design. When we can get our minds off ourselves - as being the center and focus for which all things exist - it begins to open the awesome wonders of the magnificent mind that has created all of these things, and the stunning fact that this powerful mind has turned its attention to us. As magnificent as the physical creation is, He is creating a mind in us far more important and powerful than anything so far revealed in the material creation.

This should produce thanksgiving as we sacrifice the time and energy to examine [in our limited ways] the wonders of His love in His exposing Himself to us in His creation, and more importantly, in His word. It is in His word that we are exposed to His spiritual creation and the duties that this imposes on our faith.

Our efforts may be miserably weak and erratic, but don't give up. Keep on "keeping on," especially in prayer, in communicating with God. He *is* hearing, and He will never leave us, nor forsake us, because He is God. He is the *faithful* God, and it is beyond His character to leave us.

We must grow to accept the manner in which God looks at time and events. The world teaches

us to be impatient, to demand immediate gratification of our desires. But for this God, it is never too late. Even death does not stand in His way. He is powerful, and watchful, and loving in His actions. So persevere, and keep on praying regardless of the way things look. Keep on being faithful.

When we left off in the last sermon, we were at the beginning of Luke 18. I'm going to read again verses 1 through 8.

Luke 18:1-8 And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city: and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?

Most of this chapter contains very pointed instruction - as to what we must do and become - in order to counteract the powerful lure of the times we live in. The instruction involves the making of choices that are within our power because of God's involvement in our lives. There is nothing complicated about the choices. They may be easy to grasp, and sometimes even seemingly easy to make, but nonetheless they take a great deal of resolve to consistently follow through in actually carrying them out.

This need for resolve, points out why God and His purpose must be the driving force in our lives. We must work in order to keep the vision sharp. *Prayer cannot be ignored*. We cannot allow the crush of the business of life to crowd out prayer from being a necessary part of *every* day. Notice Matthew 18:1 says that we are "*always* to pray, and not lose heart." The emphasis is on the word "*always*."

It is human to think that God is not hearing and paying attention. There is a strong tendency only to pray when we think that we are in an emergency. What if our children only communicated with us when *they* were in an emergency? We have a tendency to drift from prayer, or become inconsistent in practicing it. The very times that we are most likely to give up, are the times that we need to be the strongest in our resolve.

One of the points [Jesus is making] is that if a stubborn, frustrated human judge can be prevailed upon to act, then how much more hope can we have that God will act in exactly the right way and the right time? However, God's faithfulness is not the issue in this parable. That is something that is taken for granted by Jesus in this parable. The main point is whether our consistent, persistent, patient, and perseverance in prayer will give out before Christ returns.

This is a lesson in the fact that God does not look at time and events in the same way that we do. Because we are mortal, and because our perspective of things is so limited, we feel the crush of time very heavily. Brethren, Isaiah 57: 15 says, "God *inhabits* eternity." He inhabits time. Time just does not have the same meaning to Him as it does to you and me. Truly God acts *in* time, and He uses time, but as far as life is concerned, it never presses in on Him the way it does on us. We know that we are mortal, and we know that we are going to die, and we feel that we don't have the control over events like He does.

Always time is running out on us, and so we have a very difficult pressure to learn about. We have to come to the place where we begin to look at time more from God's perspective than from a human perspective. Therefore, it has less significance to us because we are learning the lessons of Him who inhabits time, and whose control over things is limitless. Who can stop Him from doing what *He* wants to do? Nobody! Why fight it? The reason why we fight it is because our faith is weak, and we don't grasp how things are affecting us. Brethren, we have to learn to operate within the way *He* thinks about time, and the way *He* thinks about control. Always those things are under His control, and so we have to learn to persist in prayer. *Don't give up!*

When Jesus asked the question about faith saying, "When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" He is not asking whether He will find any *belief* at all. Of course He will find belief! The "King James Version" does us a disservice here. The Greek has [in it] the definite article "*the*" or [as some commentators say] "*that*," which they feel is actually more correct, considering where the context of this question sits. Jesus is asking the question: "When the Son of man comes, will he find *that* faith on earth?" This is a specific kind of faith. It is the kind of faith that will persevere without giving up. It is the kind of faith that hangs in there, persists, and is consistent in practice.

That is the question for you and me. When Christ returns [if we're still alive], certainly we're going to believe, but will we have *that* kind of faith that will persevere? That's what Jesus is asking. So don't give up. There is much to learn in persevering in faith. In this parable the quality of what we say in the prayer is not the issue. The issue is *being consistent, and not giving up*.

In this parable, the widow's perseverance persuades the unrighteous judge to act on her behalf. In the next parable [the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican], quality becomes an issue, because this parable reveals the nature of those who will receive God's approval. Quality here is a vital issue. The major issue there is the attitude in which one draws near to God. Yes, faith is vital, as is faithfulness, thanksgiving, a sense of urgency, and as we just saw - not giving up. But now comes instruction *in humility* in prayer.

Luke 18:9-14 And he spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much

as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

The first thing to notice about the Pharisee is that he trusted in himself [that he was righteous] and that he despised [disdained] others. This man was dealing with both God and man from a position of self-elevated religious egotism.

As we begin this parable it's good to remember that the illustrator [in this case, Jesus] often takes His example to an extreme in order to help make the point clear. The important thing for us to understand as we go through this, is that every single one of us bears flaws in our character to some degree. This is true regarding the egotism illustrated here. The word translated "despised" means *to count as nothing; to treat with contempt*.

This man [that Jesus is describing] was a proud, conceited, vain, swollen-headed narcissistic self-absorbed arrogant user of other people. Right in this parable he was using God by telling Him how great and good he himself is. How can one have a good relationship with others, including God, when one has such misguided confidence in one's self, that it causes one to magnify oneself to such a degree? Do you know what this attitude does? It brings one into war against God and others because it subconsciously causes one to think that one can do no wrong.

Remember, we're looking at an extreme case here. It's very easy to begin to rationalize and justify ourselves saying, "*I would never do that.*" Yes, you would. Maybe not to this degree, but we will do it, because this kind of self-elevation colors words and action. We always have to remember that "the carnal mind is *enmity* against God." This kind of pride brings us into war against Him. Because it brings us into war against Him, how are our actions then expressed? How are our words then expressed? They are expressed against other human beings, and so it brings us into war against them. It brings us into war against God *and* man.

Please understand that God is not against self-concern, but pride pushes that self-concern over the brink to where one is hard-pressed to seriously consider the needs of others. It leads one to being intolerant, prejudiced, and dismissive of others. Doesn't it say that the Pharisee despised others? That's being dismissive. That's looking down on others by saying, "*This man has no need. Look at him. What a crud he is.*" It leads to the possibility that one will not even consider the possibility that one is wrong in what one is doing, or in the position that one holds. Under its influence men will lie in order to protect themselves. Others will even murder to serve what they feel is their need at the time, and then justify what they have done as being rational.

The same is true for those who commit adultery, or of young people rebelling against their parents. Do we realize that this is pride pushing them over the brink [through trusting their own thinking] and then despising, disdaining, the needs of others on those occasions [when they lie, commit murder, commit adultery, fornication, or whatever]?

In this parable of the "self-applauding Pharisee" and the "abased, despised publican" - the public [with some justification] looked down on the publicans because they were a band of tax-collector thieves who extorted from the public using their civil position and authority. I want

you to understand that this illustration is not a simple matter of one man being good, and the other being bad. Both were sinners equally, but in different areas. In that regard both were alike, but the outward form of their sin was different.

The proud Pharisee deluded himself into believing he had a righteousness that he didn't possess, and so his prayer is full of self-congratulation. The use of the personal pronoun "I," "I," "I" in verses 11 and 12 reveals his egotism. It forms a kind of circle around him, with him being at the center. That is the way, brethren, he conducted his life. He was the center of his universe, and his mouth was revealing the abundance of a proud and self-centered heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

In verse 11 it says that he prayed *to* or *with* himself. It can be translated either way. The translators supplied the preposition. First of all this indicates that this prayer never reached God. Do you know why not? Because, in reality, the Pharisee was his *own* god! "!!" "!!" "!!" There is no sense [expressed by him] that he was in the presence of God, no sense of respectful awe, and no sense of guilt whatsoever.

In verse 12 he states that *he* is not robbing God, because he paid tithes of everything. Yet, at that very moment, he was robbing God of the honor and respect and reverence that was due Him. In verse 11 he claims to not be an adulterer. In relation to women he undoubtedly was not, and yet he was guilty of the worse adultery of all [in his relationship with God] - the very same kind of adultery the Old Testament clearly shows Israel was guilty of. That spiritual adultery was in reality idolatry. He was his own god.

There is no lowly feeling - expressing his spiritual and moral bankruptcy compared to God. There is not even the beginning of thanksgiving for what God had given him. There is no praise for God's love, God's wisdom, God's kindness and generosity. In fact, he doesn't even ask for anything. He confessed nothing. He received nothing. But there is a very pronounced comparison with how much better he is than other men, especially that publican. It is interesting that he doesn't compare himself with Abraham, or Moses, or Joshua, or David, or Phinehas, or Elijah, or Elisha, or Samuel. But he compares himself with the wretched sinning tax collector. He came out of that smelling like roses, but only to himself. This poor deceived man was filled with conceit, and totally unaware of it.

Brethren, do you see the connection between the Pharisee and the Laodicean, who says, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"? The Laodicean bears a striking similarity to the Pharisee of this parable. The Pharisee was, in reality, "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." We ought to understand what Laodiceanism is. Laodiceanism is self-righteousness - pride that God cannot accept.

The despised publican didn't delude himself into thinking that he was righteous. He wasn't. It is interesting to note that in verse 13 it says that he stood at a distance. It doesn't say where the Pharisee was standing. Because this is taking place at the Temple, I think it is safe to assume the Pharisee got as close to the sanctuary as he could, because in his vanity that's where he felt he belonged -- right next to God. He took the highest position.

The publican, with down-cast eyes [because of a sense of shame and unworthiness], stands afar off, and beats his breast in self-accusation. He is shown as being very conscious of his inferiority

and weak, in comparison with God. He is poor. He is wretched. He is weak. The comparison is with God and not other men.

You might recall that Jesus said the publicans and sinners will go into the kingdom before the Scribes and Pharisees. I am sure that the Scribes and Pharisee who heard Him were offended and scoffed, thinking that this was surely nonsense. But this parable begins to show why. In the sinners, there is an honest awareness that enables them to see the reality of their sinfulness. Maybe not full bore, but at least they were aware of it, and not filled with a conceited egotism [because of what their heart was misrepresenting].

It is interesting to note that both of these men were thinking of themselves, but in entirely different ways. The one found himself only good. The other found himself entirely bad. What made the difference between these two men was a true evaluation and a recognition of what the self is in relation to God. The difference between these two men is the judgment each made of himself - against an entirely different standard - concerning spiritual matters.

Remember I said earlier that Jesus is taking this illustration to an extreme so that we can clearly see the instruction in how different [in approach and spirit] that these two men are. The one thing we can learn from this is that anyone who thinks he is going to supply anything of worth to the salvation process is deluding himself. How can anyone who is poor in spirit [who is spiritually bankrupt, weak and miserable] contribute anything of acceptable quality to the perfect, pure, *powerful* and righteous God?

One of these men flattered himself, and was full of commendation. The other sought mercy, and was full of self-condemnation. Their attitude and approach toward God and the self were poles apart. One stood apart because he was not the kind of man to mingle with his inferiors. The other stood apart because he considered himself unworthy to associate himself with others.

One haughtily lifted his eyes to heaven; the other even blushed to look up. One was puffed up with his merits. The other pleads for mercy. "I tell you," Jesus said, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." The publican went away justified.

Most commentators [whose works I looked at] say that Jesus' statement indicates *acceptance*, more than what we normally think of as "justification" - as legally being made right before God. Again, this is not the issue here. This indicating "acceptance" ties us directly to Isaiah 66:2 which says: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." This person finds *acceptance* into God's presence.

We're going to look at the next parable, because it plays on what we are seeing here. Actually, it's not a parable. It's a literal event.

Luke 18:15-17 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Allow little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

This event explains why the commentators say that what Jesus meant was not justification in the legal sense, but rather *acceptance* into the presence of God. The instruction's emphasis in verses 15 through 17 is on the attitude of little children - as being the model of those who are accepted by God. You will notice that not only did "God in the flesh" forbid them not to be in His presence, but Mark 10:16 tells us that "He took them up in His arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." We use these scriptures in Matthew, Mark, and Luke at the blessing of the little children.

This incident has much greater instruction to adults, because if we truly will come before God [humbly] in the way that the Publican did, then we are *drawn* into God's bosom. We're not merely justified, but accepted in such a way. God acted this thing out by having "God in the flesh," pick up the little children and take them into His arms. It illustrates how close the *acceptance* is of those who come before God [like the publican]. I want you to see the account of this in Matthew 18:3-4. It carries it one step further.

Matthew 18:3 And [Jesus] said, Verily I say unto you, Except you be converted, [unless we turn and not be like that Pharisee, but like the publican] and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall *humble himself*, [There's the lesson of this event.] as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The underlying lesson of this event [when we get all three accounts and tie them together here with Luke 18:15-17] is it again points to the fact that humility is a *choice* that we make. It has its basis in our faith in God - the knowledge that we have. We are then faced with making a choice between "this way" or "that way." We still have the opportunity to be like the Pharisee, or we can become like the publican. One chooses to be humble [which is what James and Peter said]. Where did they get their instruction? They got it from Jesus, who said, *you have to choose to be humble.*"

To me, this means that the possibility of human nature's tendency [toward pride] is almost always going to have to be dealt with and overcome [by choosing to submit to God's instruction]. Once again, brethren, it's going to take a great deal of vision, of faith, and resolve to do this. Just as surely as it is going to be easy to be inconsistent and impatient and non-persevering in prayer, it's also going to be easy for human nature to puff itself up and to withdraw from God [by not choosing to humble ourselves before Him].

It's interesting where, in the text, Matthew and Luke chose to put their account of exactly the same occasion. Luke chose to put his where he did, and Matthew chose to put his where he did. You will find that the contexts are not the same. In Matthew's account, he places this immediately following the disciples' argument over "Who is the greatest?" *There* is the pride. Jesus' answer to their argument was that unless they turn from their worldly arrogant ambition, and their course of self-centeredness, they would not even *be* in the Kingdom of God.

Little children make an almost perfect example. They are weak. Isn't that a given? Are they not

weak compared to a full-grown adult? They are very limited in strength. They have almost no experience in living in the world. Their knowledge is the most basic of all. They are simple. They are unpretentious. These are examples of what we have to become. We have to turn to a humble trustfulness of God. He was, in short, saying that the only way to the Kingdom of God is to shift from pride to humility.

Perhaps we can see humility's importance by remembering that, "*without faith it is impossible to please God.*" But without humility, the doorway to *acceptance* [by God] remains closed - even though we believe. Do you want to get into God's presence? It's not a matter of knowing things. It's a matter of knowing, believing, and humbling one's self. Isaiah hit the nail right on the head. "To this man will I look." Don't *ever* under-estimate the importance of humility. It is almost on the same level as faith. I'll tell you why in just a bit.

It is true that - without faith - there would be no need for humility. Faith is the foundation, and it makes it possible to have humility. If we have both, the two in combination produce something wonderful. Let's begin in Luke 18:18.

Luke 18:18-27 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why call you me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lack you one thing: sell all that you have, and distribute unto the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was ~~very~~ very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly [or how difficult] shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

What this section shows, more specifically, is why the doorway remains closed to those who are not humble. It has a great deal to do with humility and faith combined. And I must really also put in here - *the fear of God*: faith, the fear of God, and humility. If one's belief is combined with a deep abiding respect toward God [that might even border on terror from time to time] and humility - that opens the door? and, in all likelihood, that person will *submit* to God. That one *will* keep the commandments. Look at what we have here. We have faith, the fear of God combined with humility -- and they produce *love*. Isn't that what Jesus and John said love is? It's the keeping of the commandments. It is the expression of one's regard for God in action.

Have you ever noticed the contrast [that Luke supplies] between the child in the previous episode and the rich young ruler in this present one? The young child presents a virtually perfect illustration of the weakness, the trustfulness, and the submissiveness of humility. That is

a contrast. We are shown the young man - *strong* in wealth, and probably also *strong* in body. Besides that, he was a ruler, and therefore *strong* in political power and prominent in the community. In his pride, he thinks he has done it all - not realizing that his problems were internal [of the *heart*]. He, too, was self-righteous.

Do you think it is wrong when the proverb says, "the pride of a young man is his strength"? When we're young, there is a powerful tendency to think that we know a great deal more than we actually do, and then we invest a great deal of trust in this delusion. In Mark's account [of this event], he says that the young man actually *kneilt* before Jesus as he addressed Him, "Good Master."

There is no doubt that there was an enthusiasm in this young man. I think, there is no doubt he was sincere in his question. His calling Jesus "Good Master" was not wrong. Indeed both of the titles he gave Jesus were true. Jesus *was* good, and He was a Master. However, Jesus appears to reject it. Why? I think the reason is because Jesus detected [in this young man] superficiality in all that the young man did. He was saying and doing, what he did, only because he was being socially polite. Not because he was true of heart, sincere, and humble before God. How can I say that? I can say it with authority, because if he truly had these characteristics [as part of him], *he would have obeyed* what Christ told him to do.

Jesus hit that young man right between the eyes, exposing his covetousness. The reality is that this young man - with his luxurious wealth, his physical strength and his political power and prominence in the community - loved himself more than he loved his neighbor. His self-righteous pride is exposed by his unwillingness to submit to God. He was rebelling from doing his duty - which his "Good Master" was giving him to do.

I can connect this to Martin Collins' sermon last week. At the very opening of his sermon, Martin gave that long reading from the book, "People of the Lie." This young man was "a people of the lie." His life was being lived on the basis of an illusion. Paul tells us, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But the law does not reveal our sins unless we discern its depth in its *intent*, as Jesus taught in Matthew 5.

This young man claimed that he kept the law from his youth, but this young man's religion was something that was only on the surface of his character. He was socially religious. All three accounts of this event say the young man left very sorrowful. If this young man was so full of faith, and was so deeply religious, and believed in Christ, why did this disturb him? It disturbed him because it revealed the superficiality of his faith. He had not humbly surrendered himself completely to God. Because, within Jesus' directive, was the unspoken: "Give it all away, and trust Me."

The young man's faith, his confidence, his reliance was in his wealth, in his political power, in his prominence in the community, and in his physical strength. He knew, despite his enthusiasm, he could not follow Jesus. He wanted to follow Jesus on his own terms, and so his initial enthusiasm was gone. He left bitterly disappointed, that the requirement for him was so demanding.

I don't know what it's going to cost any of us, but someday we may find that we will have to face something just like this. We're going to find out where our faith is, and what we trust in.

We're going to find out whether we truly do fear God, and whether we will submit and do the act of love that is our duty to do. [And know that even as we do it, God doesn't owe us a thing.]

This mention of wealth and strength begins to expose a vital instruction regarding pride and humility - which we will not go into in any detail in this sermon. Notice the disciples' reaction when Jesus says that only with great difficulty shall the wealthy enter into the kingdom of God. They held and shared the [commonly held] thought that God blessed the wealthy. Brethren, that is something that cannot be assumed in one's judgment. The wealth may have come by sinful means.

The lesson is a powerful one - that apparent physical strength, including wealth, is in many cases actually a deterrent [a hindrance] to salvation. The physical and material strength make the way much more difficult because they exert such a powerful influence toward pride and self-reliance -- rather than trust in God, humility, and dependence on Him. So much so - that Jesus used the striking "camel through a needle's eye" illustration. Such a thing is totally impossible, and so is salvation, apart from what God does.

What God does is far more than merely forgive through Christ's blood. Through His processes He *creates* a clean heart that is acceptable to Him. No one will ever be able to say that he worked his way into the Kingdom of God, or feel that there is one iota of truth [to the notion] that God is indebted because of our doing our duty. He tells us simply that it's not by human strength nor by human power, but by His spirit. Salvation is by grace through faith. We must be begotten, and then *born from above* - as Jesus said in that famous and controversial section in His conversation with Nicodemus in John 3.

Jesus goes on [in the remainder of this] beginning in verse 28.

Luke 18:28-30 Then Peter said, Lo, We have left all, and followed you. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Jesus assures *all* that whatever must be given up, whatever must be sacrificed for the Kingdom of God, will be more than adequately reimbursed. He does not say that we have to wait all the way to the Kingdom of God. He does not say that we will be reimbursed in physical ways. The inference is strong [within the context of that whole section] that we will be reimbursed in terms of spiritual things - spiritual qualities, spiritual instruction, and all that is needed to be able to endure, and grow, and overcome - within the context of whatever it is that God requires of us. Everything will be supplied that we need - in an abundance - in order to make it, but it will be all coming from God. In one sense, all we have to do is yield, because God will supply whatever it is that we need, *and more* than we actually need.

The hallmark of true Christian character is faith, working through love. Humility toward God is a major element in producing that love. A hallmark is *proof* of genuineness, or excellence. A person can be truly humble *only* when he sees himself in proper comparison to God. When we

do that, there is no way that we can measure up. If we are willing to admit it, we see ourselves just like the publican did: wretched, miserable, weak, spiritually bankrupt, with absolutely nothing adequate that we can give to God. It is then, and *only* then, that we can see ourselves in proper comparison with other men. [I think this is a good place to stop. I won't be speaking again until after the visit to South Africa. You'll just have to hang on and do your own research and thinking. I'll try to continue this in the same vein when we get back.]