

THE CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM

LOVE-COMPASSION-HUMILITY

Mark 12:28-34a—And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that [Jesus] had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

Luke 10:29-37—But he [the scribe], desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Philippians 2:1-11—If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a [bondslave], being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shall we pray:

Beloved Lord, You see that we are all gathered here in Your presence. We have been worshipping You. Lord, our prayer now is that You will meet with us. You alone can touch our hearts and reach us. We have heard a lot in these days, but we pray that You will take this matter of the character of the kingdom and reach our hearts. Where we fall short, we pray, Lord, speak to us. We thank You that there is an anointing both for the speaking, the translating, and for the hearing. We stand into that anointing grace and power which You Yourself won for us at Calvary. Let it be a reality for me in my speaking, those who are translating into Portuguese or Chinese, and all of us in our hearing. And we will be careful to give You all the praise and worship of our hearts for answering this our prayer which we ask in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

THE INEXPLICABLE LOVE OF GOD

The character of the King is the character of the kingdom. There are many characteristics I could talk about but we do not have time for them. I want to take three more essential characteristics of the kingdom, and the first is the love of God.

It is very interesting that in Colossians it says that He has delivered us from the power or domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (see 1:19). Did you hear that? We have been delivered from the power and domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The Lord Jesus is supremely the King of love. You would not be here but for the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son and the love of the Holy Spirit which combine together to bring us into the salvation of God.

How incredible it is that Jesus loves me and you! I do not know about you but I am amazed every time I think about it. Why should the Lord love me? He could do much better without me. I am a moaner and a troubler. I am all the time going to the Lord and bothering Him, sometimes with the most ridiculous things, when He has so many other things to worry about. But Charles Wesley wrote a number of hymns in which he used the phrase "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Why does the Lord persevere with us? Why did he persevere with a fallen race? Why did He persevere with Adam and Eve when they fell and brought into our constitution not only sin but a rampant self-life? It is the love of God—*inexplicable*. Of course, maybe you think you are the sweetest, most modest, dearest little thing that ever walked on the face of this earth, and the Lord fell all over Himself because you were so beautiful, so loving, and so pure. It was not true. As far as God is concerned, you are ugly, immodest, self-centered, and sinful, but He never gave up on you.

This kingdom of God is a kingdom of inexplicable love. This love gives rise to all the mercies of God, to the compassions of God, and to the faithfulness of God. This kingdom is nothing if it is not a kingdom of divine love. It began in the heart of God and in the love of God. It was won through the love of the Son. It has been the Holy Spirit who is the manager and supervisor. This whole earth was created through the Son and for the Son, and in Him the whole creation holds together. But you will remember in Genesis 1:2 that it was the Holy Spirit who hovered upon the wreckage, the voidness, the emptiness, and darkness. It was the Holy Spirit who brought into being everything.

All through the Old Covenant, it was the Holy Spirit who managed and supervised the purpose of God—the purpose of God in the Lord Jesus and for the Lord Jesus. He filled the

tabernacle and the temple with the glory of God. He came upon prophets, patriarchs, and kings to speak His word but He never abode in any of them. He used them.

It was the Holy Spirit who conceived the Lord Jesus in the womb of Mary. It was the Holy Spirit who came upon the Lord Jesus as a dove, which was a picture of sacrifice—two turtledoves as the most common form of sacrifice among the Jewish people. That dove came upon Him as the Holy Spirit on His baptism and remained on Him. John got the meaning. He said, “Behold the Lamb of God who beareth away the sin of the world.” It was the Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus on the cross to offer Himself up without blemish for your sin and my sin. It was the Holy Spirit who raised Him on the third day from the dead. It was the Holy Spirit that the ascended, risen, glorified Messiah poured out on that first day of Shavuot, Pentecost.

It is the Holy Spirit who fans the love of God in our heart, who is a fire in our bones. Where there is no fire, where there is no passion, there is also no determination to go through with the Lord. This love of the King is the beginning of the kingdom and the end of it.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

There was a clever scribe who had noticed Jesus and was watching Him from the midst of the crowd. He asked Him this question: “What is the greatest commandment?” Now we who are Jews know very well that there are hundreds of commandments, and you have to keep them all to be saved. There are six hundred and eighty-four laws by rabbinical count. And this scribe said to the Lord Jesus: “What is the greatest?” Jesus answered him with what we call the Shema, and it is on the lips of the Orthodox Jews everyday: “Here O Israel, the Lord, thy God is one. Thou shall love Him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” We cannot get out of that. It is tremendous. Love requires love. Why the Lord ever loved Israel I will never understand, and probably some of you have the same question. Why did He love them? Moses said in Deuteronomy by revelation: “The Lord thy God chose you from amongst all the people of the world, not because you were great, not because you were wealthy, not because you were powerful, but because He loved you” (see 7:7-8). That is why the Lord chose you because He loved you.

Don’t ask me to explain love. Sometimes I see people falling in love with each other, and I wonder what in the world does so and so see in him or her. Of course, now and again I can see what they see in each other, but love is an extraordinary thing. You cannot put it under a magnifying glass or dissect it. God loves because He loves.

THE SECOND GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Then the Lord Jesus added something which is not in the Shema. He said, “And the second is, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.” That is a commandment in Leviticus, and Jesus brought the two together. You love the Lord with everything in your being and you love your neighbor as yourself. We all love ourselves, which is why we preserve ourselves and why we build ourselves up. That is why we have problems in the church because too many people love themselves so much that if they feel slighted, or their reputation is tarnished by someone else by gossip or backbiting, they get all bitter and twisted. We all love ourselves. I think the Lord was an amazing psychologist. It is incredible to say, “You

should love your neighbor as you love yourself." He could have just said, "You shall love your neighbor." Then we would all do that because we know we should do it. But to love your neighbor as you love yourself is a quality of the kingdom of God. Wherever you look, you find this love for the Lord and for your neighbor.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Now we ask the same question as the scribe asked that is quoted in Luke's Gospel: "Who is my neighbor?" He said it because he thought Jesus was going to have difficulty answering this one. Then Jesus told a story. A certain man was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, which is four thousand feet below Jerusalem. On the way he fell amongst robbers, and they left him for dead. They stole everything he had including the animal he was riding on. They left him bleeding and dying. A certain priest came by and when he saw him, he shuddered and moved further away, passing by him, and went on his journey. Then a Levite came by and saw the dying man, and he went around him. He would not touch anyone he did not know because he could become unclean and need a Jewish baptism to restore his purity. Why be bothered? He is dying anyway. Lots of people die, so what is the problem? Then only Jesus could have said this. He took from amongst the most despised people in the whole of Israel to help him—a Samaritan. When that Samaritan saw the man in such a terrible condition, he got off his horse or donkey, went to him, and tried to comfort him. He washed his wounds, set him on his own donkey or mule, and with his arm around him so he didn't fall off, helped him to the inn. He cared for him the whole night and apparently slept in the same room. The next day he said to the innkeeper, "Here is the money to look after him till he is well. When I next come, I will settle up if there is anymore to pay."

Jesus said, "What do you think of these three? Who do you think was the greatest?" The scribe said, "The Samaritan." It took something for the scribe to say that, to articulate it. Jesus said, "You are right. Go and do likewise."

In other words, the love of God has to have an expression. Isn't it amazing that sometimes we find it hard enough to love one another, but here we find that we are to love the world—the unsaved people of the world, the people who are dying all around us, who are in pain or sorrow, who are bereaved or crushed. These are our neighbors.

I have been in places where there have been enormous mounds of rubbish that stank to high heaven and thousands of people living in the rubbish. I have never been able to understand how believers can meet around the Lord's Table and worship the Lord and never once visit those people. No outreach, no concern, nothing. But according to the Lord Jesus, they are the neighbors we should love. Whatever is wrong with us that we think we are pleasing the Lord and loving the Lord when we are huddled around some doctrine? Do we really believe that this satisfies the Lord? If you look at the history of the church, you will see that every single time the Lord has launched an initiative to bring the people of God back to the center of His will it has included an enormous impact upon the unsaved, the most derelict, the most hopeless, the poorest, and the most uneducated. Look everywhere and you will find this truth written. The moment the church has once again lost its goal and started to degenerate into religion, there has been no concern for the lost. This is the character of the kingdom.

Jesus said in John 15:9: "Abide in My love." That love that brought you to salvation, now abide in it. If you abide in that love, it will not be long before you will be concerned for

those who do not know the Lord. It is not for every child of God to go to the ends of the earth but we can make the trip across the road to someone unsaved and in terrible need. We can pray for them. We can love them. We can show our love.

PHARISEEISM

I sometimes hear the most incredible things said about the Pharisees. I am Jewish so I know all about Phariseeism. Sometimes the Pharisees are described as hard, religious, and heartless people. Do you know how the Pharisees began? Do you know what it means in Hebrew? It means puritan. The Pharisees began as a great movement of the Spirit of God in the silent four hundred years. If it had not been for Simeon the Just, Shimon HaTzaddik, Israel would have been lost. But God raised up this man and he was the founder of the Puritan party in Israel. Now of course, hundred of years later, it became a question of tiny matters—where you sat, how you sat in the synagogue, how you dressed, whether you fasted properly, whether you kept the kosher law. Jesus said, “They worry their heads about the smallest little things and swallow a camel.” This Phariseeism is found in every age of the church all the way through it. It gave rise in Norway to a saying in Norwegian, “It is easier to wear black stockings than to have a pure heart.” In other words, you can look godly, dress godly, yet not have a pure heart. Oh how we should seek the Lord for a new baptism of love!

FIRST LOVE

What did Jesus say to the best church or the church that got nearest to the heart of God in the New Testament, the church in Ephesus? He said, “I have this against you: you have left your first love.” Then He said, “Repent, or else I will come to you and remove your lampstand.” It is precisely what happened with the church in Ephesus. It is the story of the church. If you look at the whole history of the church, again and again, the Lord has had to remove the lampstand. It all began with losing first love. First love is not puppy love; it is that love you had at the beginning when you first met the person whom you love. You could go miles to see them and never complain. You would never go twenty miles and say, “I hope you realize I came twenty miles to see you.” It meant nothing to travel twenty miles. It meant nothing to do a lot of other things for that person. That is first love. Nothing is too laborious. Nothing is too difficult. Love makes it easy. The duties you have to perform, when it is done in love, it is with a song in the heart. But when the first love has gone, all we can think about is how difficult it is to serve the Lord, to build up the church, to contribute anything.

A SPIRIT OF COMPASSION

I want to speak about a spirit of compassion. It is an interesting statement that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves? Can you believe that a priest went by without any compassion whatsoever? Can you believe a Levite went by without any compassion and was only concerned about being clean religiously?

Jeremiah said, “It is of the Lord’s lovingkindness that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22). Dear child of God, if these compassions are in the King, what about us? Do we have

compassion in our heart? Are we touched by the problems that many people face who do not know the Lord? This is a tremendous matter.

JESUS "TOUCHED" A LEPER

My beloved Lord and your beloved Lord was filled with compassion. Do you remember that leper, that poor man through no fault of his own who had contracted leprosy? At that point he was thrown out of his home and family and segregated from all society. I live in a place in Jerusalem on the slopes of the valley of Hinnom, from which you get Gehenna, meaning hell. It was the place of prostitutes, social outcasts, and lepers. I often wonder how many times Jesus walked this valley. The lepers who came to Him could not come to Him in normal society when he was in the city or temple. No lepers were allowed within the gates. Did He go down into that place where all the rubbish was poured and stinking? Did He go looking for lepers? I do not know. But this man was a leper. He had been thrown out of his home and probably out of his job even if he had a high standing. No one ever touched him again from the moment he contracted leprosy. Then Jesus met him and this is what the record says. The leper said, "You could heal me." Jesus touched him and he was healed. The Word of God is very clear about leprosy; we should not touch it lest we contract it. But the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, touched that leper. It was the first time someone had touched him in all the years he had leprosy.

JESUS ALLOWED A PROSTITUTE TO TOUCH HIM

How about the woman who came into the Pharisee's house and anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus and wiped them with her hair? The Pharisee, who was the host of the home, said, "How can this man be a prophet if He allows a prostitute to touch Him?" He had not kissed Jesus because he did not want to contract any defilement. He could not understand this prostitute, this woman of the streets. But somehow she had heard Jesus and it touched her. She got saved.

The Pharisees said that the trouble with the Lord Jesus was that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. I always think that shows a side of Jesus that as Christians we often like to forget. There was something so wonderful about Jesus that the world could sit with Him. I know many Christians from whom the world flees. No sinner would ever come near that person, and some people think that is very good. They think it should be like that because you are so pure and holy you put fear in the hearts of sinners! But not Jesus; they sat with Him. And the Pharisees thought it was disgusting. How can He be a prophet and sit with these people laughing and joking with them?

JESUS WEPT BECAUSE OF THE MISERY IN THE WORLD

When Lazarus died, Jesus wept. He knew very well He was going to raise him from the dead, so why did He weep? He wept because of the misery of all those related to Lazarus. In other words, the whole misery of death so touched Jesus that He wept. Or do you dear Christians think He was being theatrical and put a few tears out so everyone would remember the shortest verse in the Bible?—"Jesus wept." But when Jesus saw Jerusalem on another occasion, He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not" (see Luke 13:34). And He wept. If there was a

little more weeping on the part of believers for the world of sin that we live in, maybe something more would happen.

THE QUAKERS

The Lord did some amazing things in the history of the church with the initiatives that He launched. I think of the Quakers who were so despised. Of course, modern day Quakers bear no resemblance to the Quakers of George Fox and others like him. At one time, two-thirds of the Quaker preachers in Britain were in prison. What did they do? They lived and preached the gospel in the prison and led hundred of criminals to the Lord. They started a Bible school in the prison, so that out of it came new preachers and teachers. The Quakers were filled with compassion.

Florence Nightingale, who was the founder of modern nursing, was a Quaker. She went and saw with her own eyes the terrible way soldiers were left dying. As a believer she could not bear it. Her compassion consumed her, and she started nursing.

It was the Quakers who finally managed to get the prisons reformed from being death holds. It came out of compassion.

JOHN WESLEY

It was Wesley who preached to the miners. He was like the off-scouring as far as the church was concerned. How could you preach in the open air? Disgusting! The vicar had turned him and the whole lot out of the church where he had been preaching from the pulpit. The vicar did not like what he was saying, so he turned them all out and barred them from the church. And Wesley stood on his father's grave and said, "This is family property; nobody can push me from here." Thus began the open air preaching of John Wesley and the other great preachers.

On one occasion Wesley preached to the miners. They were thought to be subhuman by the society in Britain. They were nearly always covered in grime, and they were uneducated. They lived in holes under the earth digging out the coal. When Wesley preached on one occasion to over three thousand miners, he thought nothing was happening, and he had better shut up, but he went on. Then he saw an extraordinary thing. Suddenly he saw that all the faces were black and white, and he wondered what it was. Was he ill? Was he seeing some strange thing? But the miners were crying and the tears were making streaks on their faces.

It is generally thought by historians today that if had not been for the First Great Evangelical Awakening in Britain, the French Revolution would have come to England. But it was the saving of people like miners, who were uneducated, the off-scouring of the world, and looked upon as hardly even having souls. Charles Wesley wrote those wonderful hymns, and those miners learned them by rote, sentence after sentence, and then sang the whole sentence. Then they went on to the next sentence and it put the Word of God into them. It changed the face of Britain.

THE SISTERS WHO CARED FOR THE LEPERS

I have already mentioned the Moravians, but I saw the Moravian spirit of compassion with my own eyes. Gladys Roberts, who had been with Reese Howells all through the war years, was living in Ramallah, and she said to me, "Lance, there are three old missionaries

who live on the mountain a little way from Ramallah, and they would love to see you. It would be such a blessing if you could find time to go to them.” So I made a little time, and went by car to see them. I had seen the little cluster of white houses on the mountainside a number of times, but I was not prepared for what I found. There was a little leper colony and three eighty-year old sisters, cut off from their home in Moravia by the iron curtain, cut off from their sources of supply, as well as prayer, taking care of a little bunch of lepers. They carried them to the bathroom, washed them, dried them, and brought them back. They fed them because they had no hands. In some cases they had no noses or ears because they had fallen off. I could not believe it; they treated those lepers as if they were the Lord Jesus. They loved them and cared for them. I felt as if Jesus Himself was present. I could not believe that hundreds of years after the great Moravian revival, there were still Moravians with that spirit of love and compassion.

LORD SALISBURY

I think of Lord Salisbury, a British aristocrat, who was so filled with compassion about the little boys who were sent up chimneys to clean them and often died from infection. They were bought from poor families, and no one cared about them. They were uneducated and unsophisticated, but they could climb up the chimney with the help of an adult and clean it. It was Lord Salisbury of the Brethren who introduced a law to the House of Parliament that no child could be used again for monetary gain. What compassion! I think we are lacking in it so much.

WILLIAM AND CATHERINE BOOTH

I remember the story of the Salvation Army and William and Catherine Booth who were Methodists. They were so filled with the love of God and the compassion of God that they tried to go out and bring people into the Methodist church. The Methodist church had been born when those miners and uneducated people got saved. It was the beginning of the Great Evangelical Awakening. But now a couple of hundred years had passed, and the Methodists had become very respectable. They had family pews and comfortable padded seats. Into their midst William Booth would bring bums, tramps, and derelicts. It caused a terrible fuss because people said: “Maybe they have fleas and bugs. What else is he bringing into the church? It is disgusting!” It got to such a pitch that it went to the conference of the Methodist ministers, and William and Catherine Booth were asked to present themselves. They heard the whole discussion. Minister after minister said it was disgraceful; it was disturbing the church and causing great problems. When William Booth heard these things, he thought to himself: “What a terrible thing that I am part of! I am dividing the church.” He put forward a compromise that would have meant no more bums, tramps, and derelicts being brought in, but it did not look as though it was going to work. Then Catherine—God bless her; these ladies are sometimes incredible when the Spirit of God gets into them—stood up and said only one word: **“William!”** And William Booth shook himself and said, “Everything is okay; I will withdraw.” Thus began the Salvation Army. The last martyrs in Britain were in 1916 when three Salvation Army lasses were lynched and murdered by a drunken mob in Kent.

C. T. STUDD

I think of dear C.T. Studd who was always writing things to upset everybody, and he wrote this dreadful ditty: "Some like to live within the sound of chapel chimes and bells, but I would rather run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." That was C.T. Studd.

LADY OGLE IN EGYPT

Let me tell you another story on this matter of compassion, and it is about Lady Ogle. It was a great blessing for me to know her. I remember a story she told me, which at the beginning I found very funny, but when it ended I was deeply moved. She applied to the Egypt General Mission to be a missionary. She was incredibly wealthy. The board of the mission met her, all of them dressed in bow ties and stiff collars. They questioned her, and she answered very well. Then one of them said, "Do you love the Egyptians?" She startled the whole board by saying, "No. I do not." There was consternation on their part, and one of them said, "But Lady Ogle, how can you go to Egypt if you do not love them?" She replied, "I do not love them, but I believe that God will give me love for them if I obey His call." Of course, I am not being mean, but the fact that she had a colossal amount of money, which could mean help for the mission, they passed her, and she was in. Off she went to Egypt. She said, "The more I saw of the Egyptian people, the more I could not love them. The condition of the women and the way they were treated, the unhygienic levels of their lives, appalled me."

One day she was at a mission station in a walled city in the Nile Delta. The doctor missionary said, "Sister, you must come with me. We just had news that Mrs. so and so has collapsed at the city gate and I need you to hold her so I can give her an injection." They went as quickly as they could, and on the way the doctor said, "This lady is a prostitute. She will be in a terrible condition, but you will need to hold her shoulders while I inject her." They found her lying by the wall on the side of the gate. The doctor told Lady Ogle to hold her because she would be terrified of the injection. She knelt down and held her shoulders, but the smell and stench that came up from this poor soul made Lady Ogle want to vomit because she felt sick. In her head she was thinking: "Lord, how can you love these people who get themselves into a state such as this from sin?" And the Lord said to her: "Kiss her." Lady Ogle bent over and kissed the woman on her forehead. In that moment, her heart was flooded with love for the Egyptian people. This is compassion!

HUMILITY

How about humility? Yes, what about it? It is the missing quality. Do you know anybody who is really humble? I read that passage in Philippians: "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who did not think of being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped but humbled Himself and became a bonds slave. Then He humbled himself further to the death of the cross." The last characteristic of the kingdom is humility, and it is the least found quality amongst believers.

It is interesting that when the Lord spoke about this matter, He said: "Humble yourself." How can I humble myself? But the Lord says, "Humble yourself and you shall be exalted." We can give ourselves all kinds of airs and graces, but it does not mean much. It is when we

know that we are sinners saved by grace, for the first time humility comes into our being. There is a colossal amount of self-righteousness with Christians.

I grew up in a church that believed in separation from the world. This meant no cosmetics, lipsticks, sports, opera, theater, television, smoking, or alcohol. In that fellowship I saw more of the world than I saw in the world. There was bitterness with one another, jealousy, backbiting, gossip; it was the world! The bottom fell out of my Christian life as a result of it. I was so horrified. When I was first saved, I saw these same people with shining faces singing those wonderful Wesleyan hymns and others. I used to think, "How wonderful! All these saved people have been changed by the Spirit of God!" However, I found out their faces were shining only when they were singing. When it came right down to their lives, they had battles with one another. Some of them were so separated from the world they did not even know what cigarette smoke smelled like. Now I am not advocating smoking cigarettes, but isn't there something strange if we are so separated from the world that we cannot even touch the world or move amongst worldly people?

Humility is to know that you are a sinner saved by God. How did the Lord receive you? He received you as a sinner with no hope, and that is how we are to receive one another.

I find this question of humility tremendously important. It seems as soon as we get a position or a ministry or a responsibility in the church, we immediately begin to preen ourselves and say, "You know, I am something. I have arrived." We may not say this out loud but we think it.

Humility is when you know it is the Lord who is gifting you and the Lord who is enabling you. Then you realize: I am just a vessel and He has called me. He will be the grace and power for the fulfillment of whatever my responsibility is.

Dear child of God, there is a "wherefore" in the passage that I read in Philippians. "He humbled Himself to death even the death of the cross, wherefore also God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess." This is the character of the kingdom. We have to go down to go up. The more we go down, the more the Lord can take us up. May the Lord speak to our hearts about this character of the kingdom into which by His grace He has brought us. May it be so with every one of us!

May we have a word of prayer:

Beloved Lord, blot out anything that should not have been said and keep within our hearts everything that You have said. Grant, Lord, that we shall be those who serve You in love with compassion and humility. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.