

# KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 50

## *How the mighty are fallen (2 Samuel 1.27)*

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This past week we've seen some of the world's 'mighty' fall. It's a story that's repeated throughout the history of the world. Great men and women, great nations and empires have their day and then pass away – from the Tower of Babel to the Babylonian empire, and all the great empires of the world: the Roman empire, the British empire, the Third Reich, the Soviet Union. It doesn't stop there. The 'mighty', who seem impregnable today, will fall tomorrow. Men and movements the world once celebrated become those the world forever despises. This is how it has been, how it is, and how it will continue to be. One throne alone stands forever and one King alone reigns forever: the King of kings and the Lord of lords. While King Uzziah died and left an empty throne, Isaiah saw the Lord seated in glory, high and lifted up, enthroned in majesty and mercy. So it is with all kings and princes, rulers and those the world considers 'mighty'.

The Bible has plenty to say about this:

- *Pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16.18)*
- *The arrogant eyes of people shall be brought low, and the pride of everyone shall be humbled; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day (Isaiah 2.11)*
- *The Lord changes times and seasons, he deposes kings and he sets up kings. (Daniel 2.21)*

*The king said, 'Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?' While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, I tell you: 'The kingdom has departed from you! You shall eat grass like an ox until you learn that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of men and he gives it to whom he will.' Immediately that sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. His hair grew as long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws.*

*When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured the one who lives forever. For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. (Daniel 4.30-34)*

As well as warning us against arrogance and pride, the Bible also points us to the attitude of mind and heart that brings peace, rest and blessing, both to ourselves and to others:

- *Accept my yoke and learn from me; I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11.29)*
- *A person's pride will bring humiliation, but one who is lowly in spirit will receive honour (Proverbs 29.23)*

Thérèse of Lisieux seems to have understood something about all this; in prayer to Jesus she said: *You could not stoop lower to teach me humility, and I, to respond to Your love, desire to put myself in the lowest place and share Your humiliations.*

She encourages us to follow in his footsteps but understands how little progress we may make: *keep on lifting your little foot, but do not imagine that you will ever be able to reach even the first step. Ah! Do let us stay very far from all that is brilliant, let us love our littleness, love to feel nothing.*

This rejection of pride and self-interest is the hallmark of those who accept the call to adopt the Christian spirit of humility. The encouragement to follow the path of humility is also the call to show to others goodness, truth, justice, love, mercy. The humble person does not live for self and self-interest, not for self-aggrandisement and self-promotion but lives to serve others. The spirit of humility is the soil in which the fruit of the Spirit grows: *generosity, patience, meekness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5.22-23)*. Humility looks to the interests of others, especially those of the hungry and thirsty; the strangers and refugees; the destitute, sick and suffering; the victims of injustice and oppression; the homeless (Matthew 25.35-36). *Humility will stay the course of service and selfless generosity, even to its own disadvantage and hurt (Psalm 15.4).*

In union with the Lord Jesus the spirit of humility brings rest for our souls. This rest is not idleness but rest as peace of heart – a heart that does not strive for itself, for reputation or wealth (2 Timothy 2.24 and Isaiah 28.16). A heart that rests in the will of God and is content to bare his light yoke of loving service.

As meek and humble Jesus is a gentle, patient and forgiving master; the Good Shepherd. His example is to be followed by those who lead. To follow him is to have a humble heart, not over-bearing, oppressive, demanding, harsh or ruthless (1 Peter 5.1-4).

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1.46-54)*