

**Revelation 1: 6; “He has made us Priests”, Sermon # 5 in the series –
“The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on January 15th, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship,
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All the glory for what we will do or become in the Christian life belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. Last week we saw that He has made us kings. We are kings who start out low and are raised high. We are not in this position by natural birth, but only by faith in what God has done for us in Christ. We are only poor sinners by nature in Adam, and unworthy of being raised to such a high position as kings. God is high above the nations and His glory above the heavens,” it says in Psalm 113, but He “raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap, that He may seat him with princes - with the princes of His people.” God has “raised us up together with Christ and made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus because of His rich mercy and great love”, it says in Ephesians 2: 6. In Job 36: 7 it says, “He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they are on the throne with Kings, for He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.” But we also saw that believers in Jesus Christ, although we are made kings, we are in a process of sanctification that may cause us to doubt whether we have been raised as high as we have just seen. But we must become more of what matches our title. We must learn to reign over our sinful lusts and do battle with the devil’s schemes. We must overcome the world. We must suffer with Christ in order to reign with Him. This is the paradox of the Christian life. We are kings, and we are seated with Christ, but we still suffer while upon this earth. That is because it was the same with the Lord Jesus, who we are becoming like. He was born King of the Jews but rejected by His own people who would not have this man to reign over them. But He triumphed through His sufferings. He did it for the joy that was set before Him. So must we. And the way that we will do that is when we understand more about our being made a priest by Jesus Christ.

I want to speak to you about the priesthood of the believer this afternoon. A very essential truth of the Christian life, it is. A very dynamic truth coming out of the Reformation that had been suppressed by Roman Catholicism, which warped and twisted the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to cause people to think that only certain celibate men could read and understand the Bible and administer the sacraments. This falsehood was revealed for what it was in the Reformation by people such as Luther and Calvin and Zwingli, who realized by searching the Scriptures, what I assert to you this afternoon; that every believer in Jesus Christ has been made a priest to God. And so what I want to do is to explain what priestly responsibilities you and I and every believer in Jesus Christ have. We have been made priests by Jesus Christ to engage in the following priestly duties.

1st of all- Jesus Christ makes us priests because we are called to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ.

Turn with me to 1st Peter 2: 4, 5. The Apostle Peter here is telling the pilgrims of the Dispersion who had suffered as a result of their faith, the purpose for which they were called. He says, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is pictured here as the house of God being built of living stones; that is the individual believers who have been joined together with Jesus Christ who is the corner stone on which the whole building is resting and being built. Then Peter changes the metaphor, but completes the picture by introducing priests into this house, the temple of the Lord. He shows us the purpose of this house being built, not that people just sit there; but that something is being done by the believer who has been called and consecrated as a part of this living temple to God. He is part of a spiritual priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

If you look down the page a little bit to verse 9, this is what you read. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." This is a verse which calls believers in Jesus a royal priesthood. Peter is lifting it from Exodus 19: 6 which is part of God's words given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, to give to the nation of Israel concerning what kind of a people that they would be. It says, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In both cases, both Old Testament and New, there is a bringing of a people out. In Exodus God brought Israel out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, "on eagle's wings." In 1 Peter 2 God has called believers in Jesus Christ out of darkness and into His marvelous light. In both cases it results in a priesthood. In the one, a "kingdom of priests, and in the other a "royal priesthood." Listen to John Owen on this: "It should seem that there was a two-fold priesthood in that day; -a ritual priesthood, conferred upon the tribe of Levi; and a royal priesthood, belonging to the whole people. The first is quite abrogated and swallowed up in the priesthood of Christ; the other is put over unto us under the gospel, being ascribed to them and us, and every one in covenant with God, not directly and properly, as denoting the function peculiarly so called, but comparatively, with reference had to them that are without(that is, outside of the covenant): for as those who were properly called priests had a nearer access to God than the rest of the people, especially in His solemn worship, so all the people that are in covenant with God have such an approximation unto Him by virtue thereof, in comparison of them that are without, that in respect thereof they are said to be

priests. “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” (Deut. 4: 7) Their approaching nigh unto God made them all a nation of priests in comparison of those “dogs” and unclean Gentiles that were out of the covenant.” This is what we are as believers in Christ- a royal priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ. Because of His priesthood even the dogs eat from the master’s table.

2ndly- Jesus Christ’s sacrifice is the basis of our priesthood.

There are many these days who go to church and are being religious but are they offering the sacrifices which God has commanded of New Testament believers to offer? Roman Catholic priests are performing and offering the sacrifice of the mass. They are saying that Christ must be offered and sacrificed over and over again in their ceremonies. And they say that a person must go through this ritual in order to be a true Christian. Their priest makes and consecrates the wafer that He makes, to actually become Christ Himself who is received in the eating of that wafer. Listen to Charles Chiniquy in his book, Fifty Years in the Church of Rome. On page 166 he says, “To make one’s self believe that he can convert a piece of bread into God requires such a supreme effort of the will, and complete annihilation of intelligence, that the state of the soul, after the effort is over, is more like death than life. I had really persuaded myself that I had done the most holy and sublime action of my life, when, in fact I had been guilty of the most outrageous act of idolatry! My eyes, my hands and lips, my mouth and tongue, and all my senses, as well as the faculties of my intelligence, were telling me that what I had seen, touched, eaten, was nothing but a wafer; but the voices of the Pope and his church were telling me that it was the real body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. I had persuaded myself that the voices of my senses and intelligence were the voices of Satan, and that the deceitful voice of the Pope was the voice of the God of Truth! Every priest of Rome has to come to that strange degree of folly and perversity, every day of his life, to remain a priest of Rome.”

Dear Christian, Christ calls you to remember that He was and is the High Priest, He was and is the altar, and He was and is the sacrifice which was offered once for all. He never asks you to be the kind of priest that has to offer that sacrifice every week in worship. “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” (Hebrews 9: 28) “Christ would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world” if His work were not a finished and complete one. “And every (Old Testament) priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” But our Lord Jesus Christ, “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down at the right hand of God”“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10: 11, 12) This is what you believe when you become a true Christian. He is the only High Priest of our faith. He is the one who makes us priests unto our God. Nothing we can offer or sacrifice will be acceptable and

pleasing to God apart from His finished, complete, and perfect work. Well what do we offer up to God through Jesus Christ then?

3rdly- The sacrifices that we offer as priests all relate to our giving of ourselves to God in worship and service.

Let me give you some examples of what we as believers offer to God through Jesus Christ. We offer to God our hearts as broken over our sin. Turn to Psalm 51: 16. Here David is confessing his sins in the aftermath of his fall into adultery with Bathsheba. He wants to know God's blessing again, but he has come to know the necessity and the reality of God's chastening hand. He says, "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart- These, O God, You will not despise." God is well satisfied with a heart broken over sin that will not be satisfied with some ceremony being performed to hopefully get rid of the guilt of that sin. David knows that it will take something more than just a sacrificial offering. It will take real grace at work in the heart of a believer, and that will only come through Christ. But having that grace, David's heart is broken. Is your heart broken and contrite over your sin? Or do you fight the idea that you have sin in your heart as a believer, or what is far worse, as an unbeliever? A New Testament priest will offer to God a broken heart.

Now turn with me to Romans 12: 1 and 2. Here is another offering of a New Testament priest. Offer God your body as a living sacrifice. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Do you want to overcome the world? God says that it is a reasonable service to offer your body to God as a living sacrifice. You can on this basis prove to yourself that God's will is good and acceptable and perfect. Your mind and heart need to be transformed away from thinking too highly of ourselves. Pray that the sacrifice does not crawl off the altar. If it is bound with cords to the horns of the altar of Christ, it will not.

Now turn to Hebrews 13: 15. "Therefore by Him (that is Jesus Christ and the altar of His finished work), let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name." And verse 16 as well: "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." God is well pleased if "at all times we will bless the Lord, His praise our mouths employ". He is well pleased when our "souls make their boast in the Lord Jesus Christ." He is well pleased when we give Him the fruit of our lips in the sacrifice of praise to His Name for the gift of His Son. And if we have that kind of thankfulness it will translate into the further sacrifices of "doing good and sharing." God is well-pleased with this kind of priesthood, because it is the giving of ourselves out of the abundance of the grace that has been given to us in our

Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the Apostle Paul was so thankful to see in the Philippian believers when he was in prison and contemplating laying down his life for the cause of Christ. He says in Philippians 2: 17, “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Ah, how glorious a thing it is to be made a priest unto God and have such gladness in the sacrifices that we make, knowing that Christ’s sacrifice was infinitely greater and will secure eternal blessings of every sort for everyone who believes. Will you not believe in Him today and become a priest in this good sense? We can be glad and rejoice together, if you will.