

“Lower Thirds” Material

1/17/21

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Mid-1st-century Christians, were just like 21st-century Christians; they had a deep desire to belong, to be valued and esteemed by family and friends and their community. But that was now shattered. They were facing the hostility and rejection of a 1st-century cancel-culture movement.

2 Timothy 3:12, *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Honor-shame Culture - much of what is taught in the NT is written from this perspective

Culture of Individualism

This is one of the reasons the Gospel is such good news! The Bible teaches that the value of the individual is NOT determined by self-esteem or group-esteem, BUT by divine-esteem.

Our personal honor before God is not merely an individual reality, it's a family and communal reality. Our individual value is defined by God, but it is discovered and enjoyed in the communal fellowship of the Church!

The Gospel holds both realities of our identity in Christ in balance, never elevating the one at the expense of the other.

The Gospel liberates people from the dehumanizing extremes of Western individualism and Eastern honor-shame.

In the opening paragraphs of chapter one, Peter affirms our personal honor as individuals in Christ.

In the closing paragraphs of chapter one, Peter calls us to brotherly love. That command serves as an important transition to chapter two, where Peter affirms our personal honor in terms of our communal identity in Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-12

*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and **precious (τ ἰ μ η = honored)**, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and **precious (τ ἰ μ η = honored)**, and whoever believes in him will not be put to **shame**.” So **the honor (τ ἰ μ η) is for you who believe**, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*Beloved, I urge you as **sojourners and exiles** to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles **honorable**, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

Sermon Series: The Real Royals (Fall of 2019)

v. 12 - *keep your conduct among the Gentiles(!) honorable*

From the beginning, God wanted all of humanity to be holy priests serving him on earth. (**Genesis 2:15**)

God wanted Israel to be a nation of priests (**Exodus 19:5-6**).

In Christ, God's original plan for *the priesthood of all believers* is being realized in the Church (**1 Peter 2:9**; cf. **Exodus 19:5-6**).

A core truth of the New Testament is ***the priesthood of all believers***, and our duties as priests today were foreshadowed by the duties of Israel's Levitical priests. (See Supplemental Notes)

- Performed a variety of sacrifices at the tabernacle/temple
- Blessed God's people
- Exercised judgment (local magistrates) according to Torah
- Taught Israel from the Scripture

Spiritual Sacrifices

1 Peter 2:5 *You, like **living stones**, are being built up as a **spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer **spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Romans 12:1 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Nine spiritual sacrifices in the NT that we are to offer up in our bodies as holy priests. (See Supplemental Notes)

- Worship
- Prayer
- Confession
- Doing Good
- Sharing/Giving
- Evaluating and Intervening
- Encouraging, Comforting and Caring
- Proclaiming
- Reigning

By way of application:

We must not allow the fixation on and elevation of the individual in our culture to blind us to the profound importance of our corporate, collective identity.

In the New Testament, there are two primary environments where followers of Christ engaged in communal fellowship and did life together—large public gatherings and small home gatherings (**Acts 2:42-44**; **Acts 20:20**).

If we neglect to engage with one another in these two environments on a regular basis, it will be to our peril. **1 Peter 5:8** *The devil roams about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*

Without the communal fellowship of the body of Christ where we come together and serve one another as holy priests in some kind of interpersonal connection, a vital and primal part of our identity in Christ is missing.

The local church should be the most safe, healthy, and personally esteeming community on earth, a people and a place where we long to be.

Numbers 6:24-26

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.*

Supplemental Notes

From the beginning, God wanted all of humanity to be holy priests serving him on earth. Adam and Eve were commissioned *to care for and keep* the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 2:15**), terms used later of the holy work of priests at the temple.

After humanity fell in sin, God chose Israel to be a nation of priests (**Exodus 19:5-6**), but they refused. So, the sacred privilege was bestowed on a single tribe within Israel—Levi.

Through Jesus Christ, God's original plan for *the priesthood of all believers* is being realized in the Church (**1 Peter 2:9**).

Sunday, we will explore the honor and privileges we bear as holy priests in God's kingdom and how the local church should be the most safe, healthy, and esteeming community on earth.

Through Jesus Christ, God's original plan for *the priesthood of all believers* is being realized in the Church. Speaking to local churches made up of both Jew and Gentile believers, Peter echoes **Exodus 19:5-6** in **1 Peter 2:9** – *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

See Sermon Series: The Real Royals, Fall of 2019

The Duties of Levitical Priests

1. Perform sacrifices at the tabernacle/temple – **Leviticus 17:1-7**
2. Bless God's people – **Numbers 6:22-27** (cp. **2 Chronicles 30:27**) *“Yahweh bless you and keep you; Yahweh make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; Yahweh lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”*
3. Exercise judgement within Israel (local magistrates) according to God's Word – **Deuteronomy 17:9-11**
4. Teach Israel from the Scripture – **Ezra 7:10, Malachi 2:4-7**

The Duties of New Testament Believer-priests

Because of Christ's finished work, in the New Testament, the priestly sacrifices we are to offer up to God are substantively different from those of the Levitical priesthood. Levitical sacrifices were physical and deadly, but, in Christ, our sacrifices are spiritual and living. **1 Peter 2:5** *You, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Under Christ's priesthood, the presence of God on earth is not in a tent or a stone temple. The temple of God on earth is made up of “living stones”—human bodies, permanently inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Believers today are God's temple on earth. So, in that sense, and that sense only, one sacrifice we offer up is physical, but it is a living sacrifice, not a deadly one. **Romans 12:1** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the*

mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

1. Worship – **Hebrews 13:15** *Through Jesus let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name;*
2. Prayer – **Revelation 5 & 8** – *our prayers come up before God as incense in worship, and in conjunction with his holy angels, God moves heaven and earth to defeat evil through prayers we offer up in Jesus name and according to God's will.* **1 Timothy 2:1-5** First of all intercede for all people including heads of state. (cp. **Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 1:9-14; Romans 15:30; Philippians 1:19; 2 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; KEY: James 5:13-15**)
3. Confession – **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* James is saying that the local church should be the safest place on earth—a place where we can be priests to one another—where we can be part of a caring community where we are fully known and still loved and valued—a place where the burden of our own brokenness is shared by a loving group of believing friends who are utterly committed to our wellbeing in Christ, where confidentiality is held as a sacred trust. That's why doing life together in a small group is not optional, it's essential when it comes to our spiritual health.
4. Doing Good – **Hebrews 13:16** *And do not neglect **doing good** and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* (cp. **Galatians 6:10**)
5. Sharing/Giving – **Hebrews 13:16** *Do not neglect to do good and **to share what you have**, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* **Philippians 4:14-20** *I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus **the gifts you sent**, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*
6. Evaluating and Intervening – **James 5:19-20** *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.* (cp. **Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13**)
7. Encouraging, Comforting and Caring – **Hebrews 3:13** *Exhort (admonish, encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* **2 Corinthians 1:3-6** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction **so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*** **Romans 12:15** *Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.* (cp. **1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11**) The local church should be the most caring place on earth.
8. Proclaiming – **1 Peter 2:9** *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that **you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*** Although not gifted by the Spirit to be prophets in the formal sense, each of us is called to be prophetic in terms of speak truth (the Gospel) that pierces the heart.

a. Teaching

Elders, Pastors, Teachers: **1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-16; James 3:1**

All Believers: **1 John 2:27** *But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* (cp. **Romans 15:14; Titus 2:1-6; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19**)

b. Witnessing

Romans 15:15-16 *I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* (cp. **1 Peter 3:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 4:23-31; 8:1-4; 11:19-26**)

9. Reigning

Now: in Christ, every believer can presently exercise their full right to reign over the demonic—without exception, without equivocation! (**Luke 10:19-20; Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 6:10-20**) Sin and the devil have no right to rule our lives!

Forever: If we remain faithful to Christ, now, through trials and suffering, we will rule with Christ in glory over the earth when he returns. (**Revelation 5:9-10** *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you (Jesus) to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* (cp. **Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2**

Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6)