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All Christians Are Priests

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According to Revelation 1:5-6, those who have had their sins washed away with Christ's blood have been made a kingdom and priests. It is this cleansing that qualifies us to serve as priests of God.

Although under the law of Moses, God chose among the Israelites the descendants of Aaron to serve as priests, absolutely nowhere in the New Testament do we read of a special class of Christians being appointed to serve as priests. All who are in the kingdom of Christ serve as priests. There is no clergy/laity division in Christ's kingdom.

But one may wonder how Christians function as priests. While the priests under the Law of Moses offered various types of sacrifices including animal sacrifices, priests in Christ's kingdom offer spiritual sacrifices. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:5, "you are living stones, being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." Peter is addressing Christians, thus "you" must be all Christians. According to Romans 12:1, we are to (figuratively speaking) lay our bodies on the altar of God. This makes sense because our bodies are the instruments by which these spiritual sacrifices are to be offered. Hebrews 13:15-16 says that praising God, giving Him our thanks, doing good works and sharing are all spiritual sacrifices that God's New Testament priests are to offer. Also, according to Philippians 4:14-18, when we support the preaching of the gospel through giving, we offer a spiritual sacrifice to God. Are these not activities in which all Christians should be involved? And when any Christian engages in these activities, are they not acting as priests when they offer these spiritual sacrifices? The answer, of course, is yes.

Since Christians are priests, we go through no one to get to God except our High Priest, Christ. According to 1 Timothy 2:5, there is one Mediator between God and man, that is Christ. This is part of the good news of the gospel! We don't have to go through any person except Christ to access God. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, "For we (Christians) do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Remember, there is ONE mediator between us and God, no more.

Having been cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are then elevated by God to serve Him as Priest. What a great privilege and blessing this is! Yet, what a great responsibility as well. We must keep ourselves pure if we want to serve God as Priests.



MEASURING ACCEPTABILITY

Whit Sasser

In II Corinthians 8:12 we read, "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." This principle of God's word is to be respected, as well as all others. Sadly, there seem to be many areas in which it is being either ignored or forgotten. Let me list a few.

1. In Our Giving

The primary application of course, is in this area, as **giving** is the subject under consideration in the chapter. Today, individuals who give a small amount may be giving "widow's mites" or be sacrificing greatly, in order to give just a few dollars, and be giving more than all the rest in God's sight. On the other hand, those who have greater abundance, though giving a hundred dollars, may be unacceptable, due to their not giving according to what they have.

Likewise, churches may see their fifty dollars a month support of a gospel preacher as only a "drop in the bucket" when compared to the thousands provided by others, but it is accepted according to what one has, not what he does not have.

2. In Institutionalism And Sponsoring Church Arrangements Both of these, at least in part, have sprung out of a mindset that places accountability beyond a local church's ability. We hear T.V. evangelists constantly appealing for donations so that they can "stay on the air". They have eyes bigger than their pocketbooks and feel that since the work is started, at all costs it must be kept going. Others have begun work that "necessitate" the unscriptural oversight of many church's resources, or the invention of new methods to raise money, or the establishment of church supported or operated institutions and organizations. Little churches are made to believe that since they cannot do **great** works alone, they need to pool their funds with others to accomplish such. All of this is rooted in a BIG is better and BIG is required mindset that is alien to the Bible.

3. In Judging Others By Our Own Standards

In the public worship, are all the men expected to take part in a leading capacity? What do you think of a brother who does not wish to or says that he cannot? Do you judge him as less important or shame him? Those in leading roles are often regarded as indispensable and given higher esteem than the rest, including all of the women. Spiritual development, growth in Bible knowledge, and abilities to serve are other areas where we may judge others by our own selves and not by what God has said. We sing that there is room in the kingdom for the small things that you can do, but go away thinking and behaving otherwise. The Bible teaches that there was a one talent man (Matt. 25), who though he failed in his use of the money, was not measured by the five talent man or the one with the two. Jesus said, that the good ground produced some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred (Mk 4:8). In another place He said that even a cup of cold water in His name given would be rewarded (Mark 9:41). On the other hand, He also said, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required." (Luke 12:48)

4. In Measuring Success In Evangelism

How successful was Noah in his preaching to others besides his own family? How about many of the prophets of old? Were they displeasing to God because only a few were moved by their preaching to repentance? There may be times when no one will believe the gospel. There may be cities where the Lord has "many people" (like Corinth -- Acts 18:10), but at the same time cities where a few will believe, but where "the many" will not (like Athens? - Acts 17). Our responsibility is in planting and watering. It is God who gives any increase. Therefore our accountability is the sum of our ability plus our opportunity, and that measured by God. But the principle of II Cor. 8:12 is disregarded when some of the methods and philosophies of the Crossroads or Boston Discipling Movement are employed to produce numbers and when churches are pronounced "dead" if a certain quota of baptisms has not been met in a given year. When unscriptural co-operation between churches is used, when social gospel appeals are made, and when simply baptizing people becomes the goal, with conversion to Christ being overlooked, is a part of the problem our misconception about what God expects of us?

5. In Determining Local Church Status

When is a congregation "fully established?" The measure is often whether or not they have a full-time preacher (fully supported by the same church) and have a church building (being paid for). If so, they are "self-supporting". But, if they meet in a rented facility and the preacher receives outside support, they are lacking. Paul told Titus to set in order some things that were lacking in the churches of Crete, one of which was the appointment of elders (Titus 1:5), but there is no indication that acquiring a "permanent meeting place" or the "services of a full-time evangelist" were included. In fact, the Scriptures do not even teach the necessity of having a fully supported, fulltime evangelist, or church building for that matter. Some churches may always meet in some "upper room" and never use evangelists in a full-time capacity, but still be accepted of God. They may never be big in number, able to always meet in some brother's house, and little in power, never able to do much, but be pleasing to God, if faithful in what they have. The Smyrna church is described as being in poverty (Rev. 2:9) and the Philadelphia church as having little strength (Rev. 3:8), yet they are the only two out of the seven addressed that are only commended. Of course, it goes without saying, that church buildings and fulltime preachers are fine for some, but not a measure of acceptance to God.

In conclusion, let me remind you of the teaching; "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have."