

Message Six

Practicing the Priesthood of the Gospel and Building Up the Vital Groups for the Fulfillment of God's Eternal Purpose

Scripture Reading: Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 2:6; Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 14:31

I. For the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, we must practice the priesthood of the gospel:

- A. "That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit"—Rom. 15:16:
 - 1. Paul's being a priest of the gospel of God to minister Christ to the Gentiles was a priestly service to God, and the Gentiles whom he gained through his gospel preaching were an offering presented to God.
 - 2. By this priestly service many Gentiles, who were unclean and defiled, were sanctified in the Holy Spirit and became such an offering, acceptable to God; they were set apart from things common and were saturated with God's nature and element, and were thus sanctified both positionally and dispositionally.
 - 3. Such a sanctification is in the Holy Spirit; this means that, based on Christ's redemption, the Holy Spirit renews, transforms, and separates unto holiness those who have been regenerated by believing into Christ.
- B. "You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"—1 Pet. 2:5:
 - 1. The holy and royal priesthood (v. 9) as the coordinated body of priests is the built-up spiritual house; God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling, a priestly body, a priesthood, for His service.
 - 2. The spiritual sacrifices that the believers offer in the New Testament age are: (1) Christ as the reality of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament types, such as the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering (Lev. 1—5); (2) the sinners saved by our gospel preaching, offered as members of Christ (Rom. 15:16); and (3) our body, our praises, and the things that we do for God (12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18).
- C. "This you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"—Rev. 2:6:
 - 1. The Greek word translated "Nicolaitans" means "conquering the common people, being victorious over the laity"; *Nicolaitans*, then, must refer to a group of people who esteem themselves higher than the common believers.
 - 2. This was undoubtedly the hierarchy established by Catholicism and Protestantism; the Lord hates the works, the behavior, of these Nicolaitans, and we must hate what the Lord hates.
 - 3. In the proper church life there should be neither clergy nor laity; all believers should be priests of God—1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

II. For the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, we must build up the vital groups—Heb. 10:24-25:

- A. We must have an intimate and thorough fellowship in Christ as the element and sphere, by exercising our spirit with much and thorough prayer, concerning our status, spiritual condition, and present situation in and with the Lord.

- B. We must be blended by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense, into a dough for the Lord—1 Cor. 5:6-7a; 10:17; 12:24; Lev. 2:1-13:
1. We must confess the sin of individualism and individuality.
 2. We must confess all our defects, shortcomings, wrongdoings, mistakes, transgressions, trespasses, outward sins, and inward evils, and ask for the Lord's forgiveness.
 3. We must confess our sinful nature, its defilements, its attachment to the contamination of the world, and its oldness, and ask for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood.
 4. We must confess our dispositional problems and our peculiarity in our character.
 5. We must deny our self, our habit, and our old way of doing things—Matt. 16:24.
 6. We must have no more confidence in ourselves and no more trust in our natural ability.
 7. We must love all the members of our group with an equal love in the love of God—Phil. 2:2.
- C. We must keep the oneness of the Spirit, the oneness of the Body, in the one accord according to the Lord's desire with much and thorough prayer—Eph. 4:3; Acts 1:14; 4:24:
1. We must condemn all the self-exalting views and drop all the divisive opinions.
 2. We must forsake all self-preferences and disregard all personal tastes.
 3. We must follow the Spirit's direction and respect our fellow members' feeling.
- D. We must make, with much and thorough prayer, a corporate Nazarite's consecration for the Lord—Num. 6:1-4:
1. We must let the Lord gain our whole group as one entity for the carrying out of His New Testament economy.
 2. We must not fulfill any kind of formal duty but serve the Lord according to the organic leading of the Spirit.
- E. We must be overcomers in this age with much and thorough prayer; this is according to the Lord's calling in His last words to the saints in the churches to replace the degraded church—Rev. 2—3.
- F. We must pray much and thoroughly for:
1. The New Testament priesthood of the gospel to seek, visit, and contact sinners for God's salvation, to make them the organic members of the Body of Christ, and to offer them to God as the New Testament sacrifice—Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 2. The nourishing and cherishing of the newborn babes in home meetings as nursing mothers—1 Thes. 2:7.
 3. The perfecting of the saints by mutual teaching in group meetings for the work of the ministry to build up the organic Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-13.
 4. The prophesying by all the saints in the church meetings for the organic building up of the Body of Christ as the organism of the processed Triune God—1 Cor. 14:1-5, 12, 23-26, 31, 39a.