

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

BY: C. D. COLE

"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having

obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance . . . For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Hebrews 9:1-15, 24-28.

Priesthood under the new covenant of grace is a tremendous subject. It is both the arm and heart of Christianity.

It occurred to me that I might be of some blessing to you by differentiating between the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of believers, and show their relation the one to the other.

While the Scriptures make it clear that Christ is the only Priest and the new covenant ratified in his blood is the only system that can make sinners perfect; they also teach that the believer in Christ is also a priest and has offerings to make. Now the two branches of New Testament priesthood must not be confused. The priesthood of the believer means that he has direct access to God and does not have to reach God through any human priest. There are two things I want to bring before you. (1) How the believer became a priest; and (2) What his offerings are under the new covenant.

BELIEVER MADE PRIEST

The believer has been made a priest by Jesus Christ. When you and I took the place of sinners and trusted Jesus Christ for salvation, then and there we became priests. We are priests because He is our high Priest. We have direct approach to God only through Him. Consider these Scriptures: *"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be con-*

founded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," I Peter 2:1-9. "...Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" Revelation 1:5b-6. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me", John 14:6.

Everybody has to face God, but only the believer in Christ can stand before Him as his Father. All others will face Him as Judge and receive what they deserve as sinners. Every believer has direct access to God only because Jesus Christ as High Priest gave Himself on Calvary and then with His own blood entered the heavenly tabernacle and offered it for our salvation. And there He sits on His Father's throne interceding for us and pleading His own precious blood for our acceptance with God.

WHAT THE BELIEVER OFFERS AS A PRIEST

What the believer offers as a priest. He can offer nothing in order to be saved, for Christ by His one offering of Himself has made the only offering that can make us perfect before God.

In a well know Roman Catholic Magazine are these words: "Are you insured? Write and ask us about our plan to offer the Gregorian mass after your death. This is real insurance for your soul."

What a travesty of the gospel of the Son of God! I'll take the offering Christ made when on Calvary He offered Himself without spot to God. His blood is the only insurance I am interested in.

There are two adjectives which describe the priesthood of believers: the words "holy" and "royal." *"Ye also, as*

lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," I Peter 2:5. Our offerings are thank-offerings and not expiatory offerings; thank-offerings because of gratitude to Christ who made the only expiatory offering when He offered Himself without spot to God.

In I Peter 2:9 the people of God are called a "royal priesthood." Royal means kingly, and signifies that in some sense believers are kings and reign. *"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ . . . That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," Romans 5:17, 21. Believers are priest who reign; they reign over sin through Jesus Christ. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," Romans 6:14. This is the reign of grace. Grace is mightier than all our sins.*

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES

Now let us look at some of the spiritual sacrifices the believer is to offer up to God. The New Testament gives us three distinct kinds of sacrifices:

The sacrifice of praise, called the fruit of our lips. *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," Hebrews 13:15. This sacrifice is to be offered continually, not merely at certain seasons. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," Philippians 4:6. This is the result of thinking upon what Christ offered for our salvation. I used to hear a man in my church in his prayers say, "Lord, make us thankful." He pronounced thankful as if it were thankful. And from his praying I learned a lesson: the way to be more thankful to God is to be more thankful or thoughtful. We need to meditate upon the grace of God as manifested in the atoning work of Christ.*

The sacrifice of deeds and gifts. *"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Hebrews 13:16. Doing good and giving money are not expiatory sacrifices; they do not save us, but they*

are pleasing to God when done out of gratitude for what He has done for us through Christ.

The sacrifice of our body. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Romans 12:1.*

Paul here enforces the duties of believers as priests and bases his exhortation upon the mercies of God which have been exhibited in previous chapters. In view of the mercies of God, the believer is to present his body as a living sacrifice. This puts it in contrast with the sacrifice of dead animals under the old covenant. Here is the answer to those who say that the doctrine of salvation by grace apart from works will lead to loose and licentious living. Paul uses the mercies of God as the most powerful incitement to godly living and service. If one cannot be moved to good conduct and to the service of God through an appeal based upon what God has done for sinners through the death of His Son, then there is no other appeal that can reach his heart. Our bodies are either instruments of righteousness or of unrighteousness. What we do whether good or bad must be done in our bodies. If we go to church it must be in the body; we have too many spirit-filled pews. If we witness for Christ it must be done with a member of the body; the tongue. If we prove what is the perfect and acceptable will of God it must be done as we live in the body.

We have to sell our religion somewhat like the salesman sells cars; it is done by demonstration. The salesman will put you in a car and let you drive it; feel the comfort and power of it. He will demonstrate to you what the car will do.

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FAITH DESCRIBED AND EXEMPLIFIED

BY: C. D. COLE

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh," Hebrews 11:1-4.

The three cardinal Christian graces are faith, hope, and love. Paul says these graces abide, while the miraculous gifts of the Spirit will cease. In the early church people possessed gifts of tongues, gifts of healing and other gifts bestowed by the Spirit temporarily, but the graces of faith, hope, and love were to remain.

These graces were fruit of the Spirit and evidence of a spiritual birth. Nobody had these graces save born again believers. *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,"* I John 4:7. *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."* I John 5:1.

And yet the words faith, hope, and love are constantly used of people who are in the state of nature. In all fields or areas of human life we see men exercising faith, and hope, and love. The world of commerce and trade is based upon faith. The merchant extends credit because he has faith that his patrons will pay their bills. Lovers march to the marriage altar because they have faith in each other's fidelity. The whole of social life rests upon faith. But Christian faith is something above and beyond all natural faith. The faith the Bible talks about is spiritual and not natural. Christian faith is Godward and is based upon what God says. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,"* Romans 10:17. The saving object of Christian faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, and its end is everlasting life.

Now take the word hope. It is used in both the natural and spiritual sense. Hope is something in us that looks to the future with a feeling of pleasure. Men hope for wealth and this is a glad feeling,

as is hope of position or anything else that is desired. But Christian hope is something above and beyond all that is natural and earthly. *"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,"* Ephesians 2:12. And so we must distinguish between natural hope and spiritual hope. Natural hope is essential to social order and human endeavor. Without hope of future good nobody would ever attempt anything. Hope is the spirit of all human endeavor. Hope is a natural quality in the human soul. But Christian hope is the desire and expectation of a sinless state in a sinless society; the desire and expectation of being conformed to the image of Christ. It is the hope of the glory of God.

Take the word love. Love is used in both the natural and spiritual sense. In the Greek there are three words for love: Eros, philos, and agape. Eros is the lowest form of love and is associated with sexual passion. It is the love that is found in Hollywood and all the love that many people know anything about. This word for love is never found in the New Testament. Philos is used for natural love. It is the affection relatives have for each other and is called natural affection in the New Testament. *"Without natural affection..."* II Timothy 3:3. We get our words Philadelphia and philanthropy from this Greek word philos. The nearest English equivalent is "like," and denotes mutual attraction. Natural love sees something good or attractive in its object. Philos is used in the New Testament 55 times and is not limited to Christianity. Those who are not saved may and do have this kind of love. Agape is the word for divine and Christian love, and is the fruit of the Spirit. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..."* Galatians 5:22. It is opposed to the works of the flesh. This word occurs over 200 times in the Greek New Testament. It is used of God's love to us and of our love to God and to others. This kind of love is above and beyond anything that is natural to man. It is more than a feeling of affection; it is af-

fection in action; affection on the move. It is the love of devotion to God and to our fellowman. The object of this love does not have to be loveable and worthy. This love may exist for one we do not like; for one who is not attractive. God does not love us because of our goodness. *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"* Romans 5:8. This is the kind of love John meant when he wrote, *"...love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,"* I John 4:7. This is the love we must have for the heathen and for all whom we do not like. We should have this love for our enemies, for this is Christ's command to us.

Let us come back to the word faith. In Hebrews 11:1 *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* We have faith described in its action and effects. We may make the meaning plainer by a paraphrase: "Faith is the confidence that God will give us what He has promised in Christ and what we hope to receive and it is the conviction that what God says is true even though we do not see them and cannot scientifically demonstrate them. Faith does not rest upon sight or science; it rests upon what God says. Faith's only argument is, "God has said it, so it must be true."

The origin of the universe is a problem which neither science nor philosophy can solve. And this is evident from their conflicting and ridiculous attempts. But we know by faith in what God says that the worlds or universe were framed by the word of God, so that what we see was not made out of other things. CBW: *"By faith we understand that the worlds were created, beautifully coordinated, and now exist, at God's command, so that the things that we see did not develop out of mere matter."* Moffat: *"Through faith we understand that the world came into being by the command of God, so that what is seen does not owe its existence to that which is visible."*

The universe was created by the word of God. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And God said..."* Genesis 1:1, 3. The Greek

for word means the spoken word. God spake and all things came into being.

Now let us consider faith in relation to hope. Faith is confidence that we will get what we hope for in the future. The word for substance means sub-stratum, or that which lies under. So faith lies under our hope to support it. Faith in God's promise in Christ keeps me hoping for glorification or complete salvation. The believer now but he hopes to be glorified when Christ comes again. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,"* I John 3:2. A weak faith will mean a dim hope; a strong faith will mean a bright hope. No faith will mean no real hope. Unbelievers have no hope in the Bible sense. Those who ignore and reject Jesus Christ have no future to look forward to with joy. They have nothing laid up for them in heaven. For unbelievers the future is dark and forbidding, but for those who trust Jesus Christ there is a glorious future beyond the vale of tears. While struggling against sin and waiting for God's work in him to be finished, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Paul utters a blessed paradox concerning himself when he says, *'as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing...,'* II Corinthians 6:10.

It is like this: God makes a promise to those who trust Jesus Christ; faith takes God at His word and trusts Christ. Then hope begins to look forward to receiving all that is promised. Faith supports this hope while waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. Faith believes that Christ is able to save completely all who come to God by Him.

Let me close by giving some verses that put earth and heaven and the present and the future in blessed contrast:

"Down here there are
tears and many fears.
But in heaven all cries will cease
and there'll be peace.

"Down here there are sighs
and stormy skies.
But in heaven all will be bright
with morning light.

"Down here there are groans
and hurt-heart moans.

But in heaven we'll understand
in God's fair land.

"Down here the storm will rage
with creeping age.
But in heaven we'll have no care,
no burdens to bear."

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This is the way we have to sell our religion; we must demonstrate it by the life we live. The merchant and banker and grocer will not be much impressed by our talk unless we pay our accounts. Back when wigs were commonly worn to hide baldness a certain barber-preacher made a wig for a customer who also heard him preach. The wig was badly made and at a high price. And when the preacher would say something worth while, the man would say, "I ought to be moved or impressed by that, but then the wig would come to mind and he would dismiss what he heard.

We are demonstrators of Christ's religion in the various relationships and duties of life; in the home, office, shop, and mine; and we will not make much impression with our profession unless our lives correspond with our talk.

As priests with direct approach to God through faith in Christ, we are responsible to demonstrate to others the perfect and acceptable will of God.