

LABOR DAY WEEKEND CONFERENCE

September 2-4, 2016

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE PRACTICE OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Message Four

The Offering of the New Testament Priests

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8; Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5-6

Day 1

I. In John the Baptist, we see the turn of the priesthood from the Old Testament to the New Testament—Mark 1:1-8:

- A. The first New Testament priest of the gospel of God was John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus; he was the ending of the Old Testament priesthood and the beginning of the New Testament priesthood.
- B. John the Baptist denied the entire Old Testament priesthood, but his work was the beginning of the priesthood in the New Testament—vv. 1-4:
 1. He preached the baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins as the gospel of Jesus Christ; his ministry was “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”—v. 1.
 2. He did not offer bulls and goats as sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-4), but he offered sinners saved through his preaching as sacrifices (Mark 1:5).
 3. John the Baptist brought people to Christ as the One stronger than he was and as the One baptizing the repentant people in the Holy Spirit for imparting life—vv. 7-8.
- C. The second One was the Lord Jesus; in John chapter three it says, “After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He stayed with them and baptized.”
- D. All the believers after John the Baptist including Peter, James, John, and the three thousand and the five thousand added during the time of Pentecost were priests of the gospel:
 1. The first group of apostles set up by the Lord were the first group of priests of the gospel; every one of them offered up sinners as sacrifices.
 2. After them, the most outstanding one was the Apostle Paul—Rom. 15:16.

Day 2

II. Paul said, “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”—15:16:

- A. Paul’s being a laboring 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—1 Pet. 2:5:
 1. 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—Rom. 15:16; 16:4-5.
 2. These Gentiles were set apart from things common and were saturated with God’s nature and element and were thus sanctified both positionally and dispositionally; such a sanctification is in the Holy Spirit—6:19; 15:16.
- B. In the Epistle to the Romans, which concerns the gospel of God, Paul tells us how sinners can be saved and justified by believing in the Lord, how they advance in Christ by being sanctified and transformed, and how they present themselves to God as living sacrifices so that they may become members of the Body of Christ to live the church life expressing Christ corporately and awaiting His coming—1 Thes. 2:1-12; Acts 20:17-36; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:24-26; 12:1, 4-5; 13:11.
- C. We need to see how the Apostle Paul, as the unique pattern of the priests of the gospel in the New Testament, did his work in three steps of offering—15:16; 1 Tim.1:16:
 1. Paul offered the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices—Rom. 15:16:
 - a. Our work in the New Testament age is to preach the gospel to save sinners, to make them parts of Christ, the increase of Christ and members of Christ.
 - b. We need to consider how many parts of Christ we have offered to the Lord realizing that one day we will see the Lord, and we will have to give Him an account; how many parts of Christ we have offered to Him indicates how much we have labored.

- c. To offer parts of Christ requires our labor not by our own ability but by struggling according to His operation which operates in us in power—Col. 1:29.
- d. We have to labor daily on the sinners—visiting people to impart Christ into them, making them parts of Christ whom we offer to God.

Day 3

- 2. Paul brought the believers up to lead them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices—Rom. 12:1:
 - a. At the time of their salvation, we present the saved sinners as sacrifices; then as spiritual babes we must feed them as nursing mothers—1 Thes. 2:7.
 - b. After a period of feeding on Christ, they will grow in life; then we must beg them to present themselves to God as a living sacrifice—Rom. 12:1.
 - c. After presenting themselves to God, these saints can be the active, functioning members of the Body of Christ perfected to do the direct work of building up the Body—12:4-8; Eph. 4:11-12.

Days 4 & 5

- 3. Paul warned and taught every saint in all wisdom to present each one full-grown in Christ as the last step of the New Testament priesthood—Col 1:27-29:
 - a. Because the believers are still not fully matured, we must go on to warn and teach them in all wisdom so as to offer every man full-grown in Christ—v. 28.
 - b. We need to teach and admonish the saints, face to face, from house to house, ministering Christ to them that they may grow in life as Paul did—Acts 20:20, 31.
 - c. We need to labor by struggling according to the One who operates in us, not by to our natural strength, but cooperating with the operation of the indwelling Christ—Col. 1:29.

Day 6

- III. **Peter said, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”—1 Pet. 2:9:**
 - A. First Peter 2:9 says that the priesthood of the gospel is to declare, or tell out, the virtues of our God.
 - B. Here Peter does not directly speak of preaching the gospel; rather, he speaks of declaring, proclaiming, or telling out, the virtues of God:
 - 1. The virtues of our God are many; God’s love is one of God’s virtues; His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness, and His dying on the cross for our sins also are His virtues.
 - 2. You and your companions in the gospel priesthood should study all these things and become familiar with them.
 - 3. Then, whenever you meet someone, you can declare to that one some virtues of God, some virtues of Christ, in a very particular way according to what the Bible reveals.
- IV. **The New Testament service ordained by God is that all believers are priests to serve God with the offerings that He desires—Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:5:**
 - A. All the believers are priests, not individualistically, but in a corporation to become a priesthood—2:5, 9.
 - B. But what kind of priests are we today?—According to Romans 15:16, we are priests of the gospel of God; we all need to declare, “I am a priest of the gospel of God!”
 - C. As priests of the gospel of God, we offer saved sinners, as parts of the enlarged and corporate Christ, to God as sacrifices—15:16.
- V. **The service of the priesthood of the gospel is the service of the church as the Body of Christ; the focus of our service is to save sinners and offer them to God, and the goal of our service is the building up of the Body of Christ—15:16; 12:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Eph. 4:11-12, 16.**

Morning Nourishment

Mark 1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:6-8 And John was clothed in camel's hair and had a leather girdle around his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, He who is stronger than I comes after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you in water, but He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.

John was born a priest, yet he did not fulfill his function in the temple. Instead, he went to the wilderness. He did not wear the priestly garment nor did he eat the priestly food. Rather, he had camel's hair for dress and ate locusts and wild honey. He went to the wilderness and told people, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (Matt. 3:2). This is how a New Testament priest begins. The duty of a New Testament priest is to offer up sinners. John was a priest, being born into a priestly family. Yet the age had changed. He would no longer be a priest of the Old Testament; he came to be a priest of the New Testament. (*The New Testament Priests of the Gospel*, ch. 1, p. 10)

Today's Reading

In the New Testament, the first one to fulfill his ministry was John. The second One was the Lord Jesus. In John chapter three it says, "After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He stayed with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized....John's disciples...came to John and said to him, Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, of whom you testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves testify of me that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease" (vv. 22-30). My point is to show you that John came out to be a priest of the New Testament age. What he offered was sinners. He was not the High Priest. The High Priest was the One who came after him. He was only a priest helping the High Priest offer up the sinners. (*The New Testament Priests of the Gospel*, ch. 1, pp. 10-11)

John was born a priest. But this was only a type and a shadow. It was not the reality. In him, the Old Testament priesthood had a turn. It turned from the type to the reality, from the shadow to the body, and from the offering of physical bulls and goats to the offering of sinners as sacrifices. This is the sacrifice that God has been seeking for before the foundation of the world in eternity past. These sacrifices are the individual sinners. Ephesians 1:4 says, "According as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." We the saved ones were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. In eternity past God chose us. It does not matter in which country or corner of the world we are; He has chosen us. We did not know when we would be born or where we would be born. God predestinated us before the foundation of the world that we would be chosen, in time be saved, and become offerings to God in Christ. (*The New Testament Priests of the Gospel*, ch. 3, pp. 33-34)

When John turned to become the first gospel priest of God in the New Testament, he did not offer bulls and goats for sacrifices. Instead, he offered the repentant sinners as sacrifices. He did not offer individual bulls. Rather, he offered the saved souls one by one. He replaced the bulls and goats with men.

All the believers after John the Baptist including Peter, James, John, and the three thousand and the five thousand added during the time of Pentecost were priests of the gospel. Every one of them offered up sinners as sacrifices. The first group of apostles set up by the Lord were the first group of priests of the gospel. After them, the most outstanding one was the Apostle Paul. In Romans chapter fifteen he said that he was "a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit" (v. 16). Paul saved the Gentile sinners one by one, and offered them up to God. This was the first step. (*The New Testament Priests of the Gospel*, ch. 7, pp. 79-80)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 15:16 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.

1 Tim. 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.

The unique pattern of the priests of the gospel in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:16). We need to see how Paul did his work as a priest of the gospel. According to the New Testament record, he did it in three steps of offering. First, Paul saved sinners to offer them up to God as acceptable sacrifices (Rom. 15:16). Second, he brought the believers up to lead them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). Third, he warned and taught every saint in all wisdom to present each one full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28-29). He did this by laboring and struggling according to God's operation which operated in him in power. Paul's announcing of Christ in Colossians 1:28 is to tell out Christ. To present every man full-grown in Christ is to offer every man full-grown in Christ. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, p. 30)

Today's Reading

According to Romans 15:16, Paul offered the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices. All of the unbelieving sinners are in Adam. When we preach the gospel to them and they receive the Lord, they are transferred out of Adam into Christ. When someone believes into Christ, he becomes a part of Christ. The unbelievers who are transferred into Christ are the increase of Christ. When I am preaching the gospel to offer saved persons to God, I am offering Christ—not the individual Christ but the corporate Christ. In the Old Testament, the priests offered bulls and goats as sacrifices. God was pleased with that because they were types of the coming Christ. Our work today in the New Testament age is to preach the gospel to save sinners, to make them parts of Christ. When we offer these ones to God, God considers them as parts of Christ. Thus, we are offering the increase of Christ to God. Because we are members of Christ, we can say that we are Christ. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ." When we were offered to God, we were offered to God as Christ.

The bulls and goats that the Old Testament priests offered to God were types. They were not the reality. The reality of these offerings is Christ. God was happy with the offerings in the Old Testament because they pointed to the coming Christ, but today we are priests who do not offer the types. We offer the reality, and the reality is not just the individual Christ Himself without any enlargement or increase. We are offering the increase of Christ, the parts of Christ. I am very happy because through my ministry over many years I have offered a number of thousands of people to the Lord as acceptable sacrifices. When I see the Lord, I can give Him an account that I have offered a number of thousands of parts of Himself to Him. We need to consider how many parts of Christ we have offered to the Lord. We all have to answer this question. One day we will see the Lord, and we will have to give Him an account concerning our living and labor on this earth. How many parts of Christ we have offered to Him indicates how much we have labored.

In talking about his labor in the gospel, Paul said in Colossians 1:29, "For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power." To offer parts of Christ to God requires our labor, but not labor by our own strength or our own ability. We need to struggle according to His operation which operates in us in power. We are the New Testament priests of the gospel of God, so we have to labor on the sinners by imparting God, dispensing God, into them to bring them into Christ, making them parts of Christ which we offer to God as acceptable sacrifices. All of us as the New Testament priests are obligated to do this. One day we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and we will have to give the Lord an account.

When we talk about knocking on people's doors for the preaching of the gospel, what we mean is to visit people. We visit people to impart Christ into them. Visiting people to impart Christ into them must be a part of our Christian daily life. In our daily life, we must impart God and dispense Christ into others to make them, the sinners, parts of Christ that we may present these parts as sacrifices offered to God for His good pleasure. This will produce the members of Christ to constitute His Body and eventually issue in this Body being expressed on earth in many localities. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, pp. 30-32)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

1 Thes. 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

Rom. 12:4-5 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

After the saving of sinners, Paul continued to nourish the new ones, to bring them up in the same way that we would raise up our children. When we bring up our children, we first teach them what to do, and after a period of time, we charge them to do it themselves. At the time of their salvation, Paul presented the saved sinners as sacrifices. Then Paul brought them up and led them to present themselves as living sacrifices. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, p. 32)

Today's Reading

When I preach the gospel to a sinner and he gets saved, he is now in Christ. I present this one to God in Christ, with Christ, and as a part of Christ, as a spiritual sacrifice. Now that he is saved, he is a babe in Christ. I should not leave him alone, but I have to feed him as a nursing mother. After revealing in Romans 1 and 2 that the believers were sinners, Paul did this feeding work in chapters three through eleven. Then in Romans 12, Paul, the feeder, begged the saints to present themselves to God as living sacrifices. Paul did not beg the saints to offer themselves to God in Romans 1. It was after his fellowship through eleven chapters that he could ask the saints in Romans 12 to offer themselves to God as living sacrifices and be His serving members. We have to offer ourselves directly to God, but we do this by being helped, by being perfected, by the preaching apostle. This is the pattern we have to follow.

When people receive the Lord as their life, they are babes. After a period of time of feeding on Christ, they grow and grow in life until, spiritually speaking, they enter into their teens. In a family, the parents cannot give the little children much responsibility, but later the parents can charge them to do things according to their stage of growth. When a child becomes thirteen years old, he comes out of elementary school and enters into junior high school. Paul's charge in Romans 12:1 is something just out of "elementary school." The elementary teaching is in Romans 1—11. Romans 12:1 may be considered as a charge to those who are now "thirteen years old." After the long teaching in Romans 1—11, the children have entered into "junior high." Paul offered them as sacrifices to God at their conversion. Now that they are in their "teens," he begs them to present themselves to God, to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

After this offering in Romans 12, the practice of the Body life begins. After the saints' presentation of themselves to God, they can be the active members of the Body of Christ. Thus, in the following verses of chapter twelve, we see that the ones who present themselves as living sacrifices become functioning members of the organic Body of Christ. These living members function according to their gifts, such as prophecy or teaching (vv. 6-7).

Before Romans 12, there was no practice of the Body life. Beginning in chapter twelve the saints are beginning to be perfected to practice the Body life. After being perfected, the saints will do the same work as the gifted ones—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:11-12). Even though the saints are not these particular gifts, they will do the same work that these gifts do. This work is the work of the New Testament ministry, which is to build up the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is built directly by the perfected saints, not by the perfecting gifts. This Body is built up and expressed in many localities on this earth as the local churches. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, pp. 32-34)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____

Morning Nourishment

Col. 1:27-29 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; for which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

Because the believers are still not fully matured, there is the third step of Paul’s gospel work in the New Testament priesthood. This third step can be seen in Colossians 1:27-29: “To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; for which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.” What kind of Christ did Paul announce? The Christ whom he announced is not that simple. He announced the indwelling Christ as the hope of glory. Paul announced a wonderful person. Christ as the hope of glory cannot work in us fully without a worker like Paul. (*The Advance of the Lord’s Recovery Today*, ch. 2, p. 34)

Today’s Reading

The word “warning” implies that there are troubles, problems, hardships, and mistakes that we can make. Therefore, we need to be warned. Warning also implies admonishing and rebuking. Paul warned and taught every man in all wisdom. “In all wisdom” means that Paul warned and taught one person in one way and another person in another way. He warned and taught every man face to face. Paul did this so that he could present, or offer, every man full-grown in Christ. Paul did not want to miss anyone, desiring to present every man full-grown.

In Acts 20 Paul said that he taught the saints publicly and from house to house (v. 20). He also said that he admonished each one of the saints for three years night and day with tears (v. 31). Paul went to the homes of the saints to teach them and admonish them one by one. I lived in Anaheim for many years, but I went to very few homes of the saints to visit them. I feel very sorry about this. We have been off in our service due to the traditional concept. Paul said that he taught publicly and that he also taught from house to house. “From house to house” in Greek means “according to houses.” Paul taught, admonished, and warned the saints face to face. By this teaching from house to house to admonish each one of the saints, Paul ministered Christ to the saints to cause them to grow in life.

In the Old Testament, a full-grown priest had to be thirty years old. A person who was twenty-five years old could only be an apprentice, a learner, in the priesthood. The Lord Jesus began His ministry when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), the full age for God’s service (Num. 4:3, 35, 39, 43, 47). We need to labor on others by warning them and teaching them in all wisdom until they are full-grown in Christ. We warn each one and teach each one in many, many ways, that is, in all wisdom. The full-grown, matured saints become the active members of the organic Body of Christ, the parts of Christ. In other words, they all become the corporate Christ. To offer the saints full-grown in Christ is to offer the corporate Christ. In such a condition, they have become parts of Christ in full, the constituents of the corporate Christ.

Because we are not full-grown in Christ, we still need to be warned and taught in all wisdom. We may say that we are parts of the corporate Christ, but are we His parts practically, in our daily life? Do you believe that the parts of the corporate Christ would participate in anything sinful or worldly? Some of us may have grown to the stage of Romans 12:1, the stage of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1, however, is not at the stage of full growth. We have to be helped by the priests who handle us to grow up into the full growth in Colossians 1:28. The apostles who handle us, who serve us with Christ, desire to present us in Christ to God as parts of the corporate Christ. (*The Advance of the Lord’s Recovery Today*, ch. 2, pp. 34-36)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____

Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house.

Acts 20:31-32 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears. and now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.

Paul said that he labored for this by struggling. The Greek word for struggling means fighting, battling, or wrestling. It is not an easy thing to present every man full-grown in Christ. Paul did not labor according to his own ability or strength, but according to Christ's operation which operated in him in power. Christ's indwelling is so that He can operate and move in us in power. The power here is a dynamic power. Christ is working in us, but do we realize and sense that daily, day and night, Christ the living One is indwelling us and operating within us? (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, p.36)

Today's Reading

We need to labor by struggling according to the One who operates in us, not according to our natural strength. We need to cooperate with the operation of the indwelling Christ. For the carrying out of His New Testament economy, God has done His part. He surely has consummated the works on His side to do everything for us. Now He is operating in us to make us the energizing priests. We have to take care of our part, to fulfill our duty. We may feel that we are weak, that we are nothing, and that we can do nothing, but as long as we are willing to operate, He will be our energizing power. As long as we are willing to do business, He will be our capital. The problem to Him is that we would not be willing to cooperate with Him.

The Lord told us in the New Testament that all of His chosen people, who are today's believers, are His priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). No priest can be lazy because every priest has to offer something day by day. Every priest has to be very, very diligent, even aggressive, in offering sacrifices to God. God does not want the sweet smell of the offerings on the altar to stop. He likes this sweet savor to ascend to Him all the time for His acceptance. In Romans 15:16 Paul said that he was a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, an energizing priest of the gospel of God, to offer the nations to God. The main offering of the New Testament priests should be the saved sinners as parts of the enlarged and corporate Christ, offered to God as the New Testament sacrifices of the gospel. In the Old Testament, the main offerings were bulls and goats, which were types of Christ. Today we are offering Christ, but not the individual Christ. We are offering the corporate Christ.

This kind of offering should continue all the time. As the New Testament priests, we have to make the preaching of the gospel a part of our daily life, our daily walk. A priest's daily life and daily work is to offer sacrifices to God. In the Old Testament, the priests offered bulls and goats all day long, morning and evening. This is a type of what we should do. As the New Testament priests, we should offer sinners, regenerated, sanctified, transformed, and even conformed to the image of Christ. We should offer these persons as parts of the corporate Christ to God. We should not forget that as believers we are priests and that a priest is always offering something to God. Paul was offering the sinners he saved as sacrifices to God all the time.

We may have experienced Romans 12:1, but we have not reached the state of being full-grown in Colossians 1:28. To be presented to God full-grown in Christ is the last step to finish the sacrifice of the New Testament priesthood. This sacrifice needs three steps: salvation in Romans 15:16, growth in life in Romans 12:1, and the maturity in life in Colossians 1:28. All these steps are the work of the New Testament priesthood of the gospel. According to the divine revelation, to save sinners, to teach the Bible, to edify the saints, and to set up churches are all the work of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel of God is the New Testament ministry to carry out God's New Testament economy. We must bear this responsibility for God's good pleasure. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 2, pp. 36-38)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____

Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Rev. 1:5-6 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

First Peter 2:9 says that the priesthood of the gospel is to declare, or tell out, the virtues of our God. Here Peter does not directly speak of preaching the gospel; rather, he speaks of declaring, proclaiming, or telling out, the virtues of God. The virtues of our God are many. God's love is one of God's virtues. His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness, and His dying on the cross for our sins also are His virtues. You and your companions in the gospel priesthood should study all these things and become familiar with them. Then, whenever you meet someone, you can declare to that one some virtues of God, some virtues of Christ, not in a legal way but in a very particular way according to what the Bible reveals. (*The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way*, ch. 14, p. 152)

Today's Reading

Romans 15:16 tells us that the New Testament believers are the New Testament priests and that we, the New Testament priests, are priests of the gospel. Then 1 Peter 2:5, 9 says that we as priests should be built up together to be a priesthood, that is, a priestly body. Thus, if we are going to convert sinners into members of Christ, we must do it in a corporate way. Two or three priests must be built up together as a priesthood. As used in the Bible, the word priesthood bears two denotations. First, it denotes the priestly service, and second, it refers to the priestly body, a group of priests built together to become a priesthood. Merely to go out to preach the gospel by yourself is not adequate. You must be built together with others. However, it would not be effective to call together the entire congregation in your locality to promote the priesthood of the gospel. You should simply contact two or three of the saints and be built together with them as a priestly body.

Then you must go to contact people. You should not excuse yourself by saying that you do not have time to do this. You may feel that you do not have time to contact people for the gospel, but you may have time to speak at length on the telephone or to watch television. If you account for your time, you will see that every day you waste a certain amount of time. Especially in speaking on the telephone, we need to learn to shorten our conversations, speaking only what is necessary, in order to save our time.

Saving money is not as important as saving time. Hence, just as we count our dollars and cents in order to save money, we need to count our hours and minutes in order to save time. From the moment we rise up in the morning, we need to budget our time. Then we will see that we do have time to visit people for the gospel. At least two days a week we will be able to spend two hours a day for gospel preaching. We can write to our friends; we can call our friends; we can go to visit people; or we can invite them to our home, either for tea or for dinner. There are many things that we can do to contact people and bring them to the Lord.

If you have the heart to begin to practice the priesthood of the gospel, you must study, budget your time, and go to contact people. You can knock on "cold" doors, and you can also knock on "warm" doors. To knock on people's doors does not necessarily mean that you literally go up to a door and knock on that door. That is not the only meaning of knocking on doors. Your writing a letter to your schoolmate can be considered your knocking on his door. To call people on the telephone also is to knock on doors to contact people.

You must budget your time, and you must go out to contact people. You can even stay home and use your telephone, your pen, and your prayer to contact people. There is a way. Then you need to learn how to speak to people by proclaiming to them the virtues of the Lord who saved you out of darkness into His marvelous light. To tell people the virtues of this One, you need to learn by studying. Do not "take it easy." We need to realize that nothing in the Lord's service is easy.

This is the first step in the practice of the God-ordained way. I encourage you to put the points in this message into practice for one or two years. I believe that in many localities there will be a result in only six or eight months. Through your practice, the example, the model, set up by you will stir others up. Then, gradually, in your church a habit will be built up to practice the New Testament gospel priesthood. (*The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way*, ch. 14, pp. 151-154)

Enlightenment and inspiration: _____
