

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

(Part 15 – series on Baptist Distinctives)

TEXT: 1 Peter 2:5,9
Hebrews 4:14-16

INTRODUCTION: We rejoice to know that God has made us – and every believer – “priests unto God.” Collectively we constitute the “*holy priesthood*” and the “*royal priesthood*” of which the inspired apostle speaks. Virtually all who call themselves Christians would affirm this doctrine, but few are willing to avail themselves of the power and privilege of their priestly calling.

The function of a priest is to **stand for**, or **represent**, others. Only Jesus as our great Sacrifice and High Priest can **atone** for sin. We often sing:

“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

Yet there are “spiritual sacrifices” that we as New Testament priests should offer unto God. In our last study we identified them – our physical bodies (Rom. 12:1,2), our being poured out as a drink offering for others (Phil. 2:17), our proclaiming of the Gospel message that results in conversions (Rom. 15:16), our giving sacrificially of our means (Phil. 4:15-19), and the praise of our lips (Heb. 13:15).

Our greatest sacrifice and function as New Testament priests, however, is the offering of **intercession**, or **prayer**. Yet this is perhaps the most neglected. E.M. Bounds, the great author on prayer, noted that the vast majority of believers of his day only paid lip service to the eminent prayer warriors of yesteryear whose “halo of sainthood has come down to us... We build their tombs, and write their epitaphs, but are careful not to follow their examples.” May God’s Spirit convict us of our prayerlessness!

OUTLINE: What kind of authority has been given to us to intercede for others?

III. The Responsibilities of a Believer-Priest

A. To offer “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet. 2:5)

1. Our physical bodies (Rom. 12:1,2)
2. Our unstinting expenditure for others (Phil. 2:17)
3. Our proclaiming of the Gospel (Rom. 15:16)
4. Our sacrificial giving of our means (Phil. 4:15-19; Heb. 13:16).
5. Our praising God with our lips (Heb. 13:15; Hos. 14:2)

B. To boldly intercede (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22)

1. A **delegated** authority (Matt. 28:18,19; Isa. 45:11)
 - a. Because of our union with Christ (Eph. 1:23; John 15:7)

- b. Because of our unction from the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:12,13)
- 2. A **discriminating** authority (given only to those qualified)
 - a. Holiness (Ex. 28:36-37, Lev. 8:13)
 - b. Faith (James 1:5-7)
 - c. Humility (1 Cor. 10:12)
 - d. Boldness (1 Jn. 5:14; Heb. 10:19-22)
 - e. Fear (Heb. 5:7)
- 3. A **dynamic** authority
 - a. Removing obstacles (Matt. 17:20)
 - b. Wrestling with unseen powers (Eph. 6:12)

IV. The Repudiation of Unscriptural Hierarchy

- A. The two extremes
 - 1. The error and doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6,15)
 - 2. Laodicean rule
- B. The disastrous results
 - 1. Confession to human priest
 - 2. Priestly absolution (forgiveness)
 - 3. Transubstantiation
 - 4. The “infallibility” of the Pope (Matt. 23:8,9)
- C. The biblical view of ordination

V. The Implications of New Testament Priesthood

- A. Congregational polity
- B. Unified mission
- C. Related matters, cautions
 - 1. Soul competency vs. “right of private interpretation”
 - 2. Soul liberty

CONCLUSION: Who among us will “*stir up himself to take hold of [his] God*”? Who will “*give themselves to prayer*”? Or are we content to have just “a little talk with Jesus” and think that will make it right in a world gone wrong? Both the desperate need of the hour and the unlimited potential of prayer call us to exercise our noble privilege of intercession!