

TITLE: A Royal Priesthood (Part 7)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:9b

THEME: The Believer's Priesthood

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I recently read an apocryphal story about a pastor who discovered a small kitten stuck in a tree in his backyard. The pastor did all he could to reach the kitten, all to no avail. He tried to encourage the kitten to climb down himself (but you know how cats are; they go up w/ease, but aren't so adept at reversing the process).

The tree wasn't sturdy enough to for him to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car he could bend the tree down enough to get the kitten. He did all this, checking his progress frequently. But as he moved the car a little further forward, the rope broke. The tree went "boing!" and the kitten instantly sailed through the air - out of sight.

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. No. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, "Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping," and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members. He was amazed to see she was buying cat food. Now this woman was a cat-hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her, "Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?" She replied, "You won't believe this," and told him how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing. Then a few days before, the child had begged again, so the Mom finally told her little girl, "Well if God gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it."

She told the pastor, "I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. No sooner had she prayed and a kitten came flying over the neighbor's house and landed at her feet."

Perhaps my favorite "pastor" joke ==>

Tale about a pastor who stopped by to visit one of his parishioners, an elderly widow who lived alone. They sat down and chatted for a while and after about 15 minutes the widow excused herself to use the bathroom. She told her pastor, "I'll be back in a few minutes; make yourself at home." The pastor sat there twiddling his thumbs for a while. He noticed a bowl of peanuts on the coffee table in front of him, and so he thought, "I guess I'll munch on some of these."

About 5 minutes later the elderly woman returns and apologizes for taking so long. Pastor replies: "No problem. I hope you don't mind me helping myself to your peanuts." The woman replied, "Oh, no. These dentures you know. Once I suck the chocolate off of them peanuts they're pretty much useless to me."

(That's all the entertainment you're going to get this AM)

Read Passage

Part Seven of our series within 1 Peter ==>

I. The Church as a Royal Priesthood (2:4-10)

Of course, that title comes right out of verse 9 ==>

But you are a royal priesthood . . .

"The priesthood of the believer is the privilege won for every Christian by Christ giving the believer access to God in prayer, confession, sacrifice and Word."

One of the essential truths rediscovered during t/16th century Reformation.

In was back in April that we embarked upon part two of this section. In that message I quoted Psalm 119:105 ==>

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

God's Word is a lamp; it brings light to darkness.

Have you ever driven your car on a pitch black night down a road w/no streetlights? No moon, no light save t/headlights of your vehicle. It's fascinating—especially if it's a road that has some rises and dips to it—it's fascinating to watch t/light from the headlights literally chase t/dark away. It's like t/darkness evaporates from before the light.

That's what a knowledge & application of God's Word does for us. We don't walk in darkness (in fact, we've been called out of darkness, v. 9). One of t/reasons why we don't walk in darkness is because we have a lamp to our feet and a light to our path in God's Word.

A knowledge of God's word (and a thoroughly Xn worldview) dispels t/shadows of sin, it chases away t/futility & stupidity of godless living & poor decisions.

That has always been true. True for believers under the OT economy as it is for those under the New.

However, during middle ages t/light of t/Word was suffocated under a dark cover of man-made religion & political ambition. CH was no longer made up of believer-priests, each w/access to God & His Word. The believer priest was defrocked; he was locked in a chamber of darkness.

The CH became ID w/the institution. To be part of t/CH was to be part of t/corporate entity whose headquarters was in Rome.

Those men used by God to bring reform to t/CH pointed out that this is grievous error. The CH was universal and spiritual. To be part of t/outward institution was no guarantee that one was part of t/spiritual reality. IOW - being a Xn wasn't a man-made decision. Men don't bestow eternal life upon you in return for your joining a CH & jumping through sacramental hoops. No, God sovereignly ordained to eternal life those who were to be part of his universal body.

Time of great spiritual darkness. But t/darkness was to be banished by t/light. Hence t/Latin phrase used to describe this time of history: "*Post Tenebras Lux*" (after darkness, light). God delivered t/CH from t/damning darkness of religion & restored unto it t/light of regeneration.

We speak often of t/evangelical doctrines that were recovered during those times: Authority of the Bible; Salvation by grace alone thru faith alone; Sufficiency of JC in His person and work. But t/one thing we don't often speak of in connection w/these things is a silver thread that binds them together: Priesthood of t/believer.

I say a silver thread because apart from t/believer's priesthood (rem. what we meant by that) ==>

... the privilege won for every Christian by Christ giving the believer access to God in prayer, confession, sacrifice and Word. ==>

Apart from that truth there can be no personal authority of t/Bible // understanding of salvation // sufficiency of JC. Why? Because if you strip away t/priesthood from every Xn you deny that which he or she is. Take away your priesthood B4 God & you have no right to t/Bible // justification bestowed directly by God through faith. Those things have to be mediated for you by professional clergy – by a select caste of men called priests.

"*Post Tenebras Lux*"! Thanks be to God for calling us out of darkness! Thanks be to God that we enjoy by His grace t/status of royal priests ministering before him in a spiritual temple, t/CH.

We noted back in v. 4 that this New Covt. gift, the priesthood of each and every believer, was ==>

A. Established in the Living Stone (4) *This is the Source of our Priesthood*

And coming to Him as the Living Stone, having been rejected by men—but chosen by God and precious [to Him].

The source, t/author of our priesthood is t/Living Stone, JC, our great H.P.

It was He who entered t/Holy of Holies, He passed through the veil, the curtain that separated us from our God. He made perfect sacrifice for his own, a sacrifice of his very life to God.

On this great truth is built the exhortation of Hebrews 10:19-25 ==>

19 Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

B. Erected as a Spiritual Temple (5) *This is the Structure of our Priesthood*

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Your priesthood, your position and privilege as a Xn, has structure to it. You are a living stone. You have been pulled out of t/stone quarry of sin. God took you, he shaped you and formed you, and he placed you in a/spiritual building which is likened to a Temple.

You've got to catch the imagery here! This verse alone assassinates what I refer to as "lone-ranger Xnty." I grieve when I hear of genuine believers who have removed themselves from t/local CH. Some have been hurt (most all of us know what that's like). Sometimes t/CH can be quite ugly.

"The church is like Noah's Ark, if it wasn't for the storm outside we couldn't stand the stink inside." [European Theologian Reinhold Neihbur]

But it would be a tragedy for someone to use that as an excuse to divorce themselves from that which is good. T/CH is good (w/all of it's imperfection, warts, shortcomings). The enemy loves nothing more than to see a Xn twiddle years away separated from that which is good and needful.

Truth is: You cannot be a Xn & not be part of t/building. Structure of our priesthood isn't chaotic, it's cosmetic. WDYM cosmetic? We're not talking about makeup. Cosmetic comes from t/Gk. noun *κοσμος* which means orderly or an orderly system. Our English words "cosmos, cosmopolitan, cosmetic" come from this Grk. word.

The opposite of cosmos is chaos. Take t/word "cosmetics" t/goal of t/using of which is to take that which is in chaos and make it orderly.

All joking aside: Structure of our priesthood isn't chaotic, it's cosmetic.

I love it when I hear people say, "I don't believe in organized religion." So you believe in chaotic religion?

B. Erected as a Spiritual Temple (5) This is the Structure of our Priesthood

Third major point ==>

C. Elected as the People of God (vv. 6-10) *This is the Security of our Priesthood*

We have been elected // chosen // predestined // foreknown // foreordained (biblical terms).

This is our security, is it not? ==>

This is the Security of our Priesthood

If you know JC God has selected you to be part of a Royal Priesthood. He doesn't choose you to reject you.

Hard for you to believe it now, but in Junior H.S. I was no athlete. Phys. Ed. was a humiliating time for me. Unfort. my parents allowed me to be a nerd (here I'm in 6th grade and I show up wearing shorts, black socks and dress shoes!). Some of you have gone through this process: The coach gets all the kids together and says, "Today we're playing baseball. Everyone line up. John and Mike, you two are captains. Mike, pick a number between 1 and 10. Seven coach. John? Three Coach. The number was Four. John, you pick first." Was there ever a better recipe for Pre-teen humiliation? Almost as bad as t/group shower afterward! The captains were always the best players. And who do the best players choose? The best players! So I stood there, in my gym shorts, black socks and dress shoes while everyone else around me got picked. Finally, it came down to me and another guy who happened to be in a wheel chair. (Gotta admit, things changed in H.S. & I became the star athlete I yet remain in my 40s!)

Forgive me for the seeker church phraseology, but God doesn't choose us to be on his team like that. He knows that we're all terribly handicapped by sin. Like Israel of old, where God declares to his people in Deut. 7 -

7 "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery . . .

God doesn't choose his elect because of how wonderful they are! He chose you because you were destitute. You weren't a winner, you were a loser. Each one of us, before God set his great love upon us, each one of us was t/kid standing on the chalk mark in black socks and dress shoes! Better theologically: we weren't standing we weren't even alive. We were dead in our sin & God took that which was dead & made it alive (Eph. 2:5.)

This is the Security of our Priesthood

God chooses to keep us. We're not white elephant gifts that he picks to trade in for something better.

From this one point follows several subpoints, ea. begins w/letter "C".

1. The Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

For it is contained in Scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a chosen stone, a precious cornerstone . . .

2. The Confidence of Our Belief (6b)

. . . and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.

3. The Contrast of Unbelief (7-8a)

This honor, therefore, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve: the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner. And: a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. . . .

4. The Cause of Unbelief (8b)

They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, unto which [ends] they were appointed.

Then in v. 9==>

5. The Character of God's People (9a)

But you are

At this point Peter returns to t/theme that we saw est. in v. 7 ==>

This honor therefore, is for you who believe. . . . {contrast - vv. 7-8}

But you are

What follows are what we could call 4 titles of honor – unilateral unconditional blessing of God acting in mercy and love.

As we noted last week, each of these descriptive titles have their background in the OT. They were used of O.T. Israel; Peter here uses them of t/CH. We have is a description of t/CH that transcends Israel.

All have their background in 1 of 2 passages: Exo. 19:6 or Isa. 43:20-21.

1) an ELECT RACE, - Isa. 43

2) A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, - Exo. 19

3) A HOLY NATION, - Exo. 19

4) A PEOPLE FOR [GOD'S OWN] POSSESSION - Isa. 43

1st and last = Isa. 43; Middle two (2-3) = Exo. 19.

But you are . . .

a. #1 - An Elect Race

The true, universal CH of JC is a chosen race of people. That was a 2nd c. designation for Xns. They were referred to as a race of people, even as a "third race." So, Clement of Alexandria & Tertullian (neither Jew nor Gentile - an elect race of those who are spiritually related to JC, the Head of the Race if you will.

b. #2 - A Royal Priesthood

You are . . . A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD . . .

Here we see t/CH as a "Royal Priesthood." 2 metaphors, "royalty" and "priesthood".

Right out of t/LXX Exodus 19:6 which reads ==>

"You shall be to me a royal priesthood and a holy nation."

That which God speaks of OT Israel finds fulfillment in t/NT CH.

(1) The Adjective "Royal" (βασιλείος)

Points to t/three offices of X (prophet, priest and king). Ties into the Melchizedek P.H. that X fulfilled (that's Hebrews 7). M. appears in Gen. 14 as both King and Priest of Jerusalem.

Priesthood of Melchizedek	Fulfilled in Jesus Christ
Was a royal priesthood - Melchizedek was a King and a Priest (Gen. 14:18), something unknown among Aaronic priests of Israel.	Is both Priest and King (Zech. 6:12-14; Heb. 9:11; Rev. 19:16)
Was independent of ancestral ties (Heb. 7:3)	The priesthood of Christ is not dependent upon his being of Aaronic descent (Heb. 7:14).
Was both king of righteousness and king of peace (Heb. 7:2)	Though Christ was have both righteousness (Rom. 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Pet. 1:1) and peace (Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:15)
Was timeless in that there is no record of a beginning or a ending	Christ's priesthood is forever (Psalm 110:4, cf. Heb. 5:6, 6:20, 7:17)
Prefigured the future Priesthood of Jesus Christ in that it was superior to that of Aaron (note Abraham, through whom came Aaron, paid tithes to Melchizedek, cf. Heb. 7:4-10)	Christ's priesthood is superior to all others and infinitely perfect (Heb. 5:1-6, 7:11-28, 9:11-10:18)

The Priesthood of X is a Royal Priesthood. He is a Royal, H.P. He's H.P. and we're ministering priests that make up a Royal P.H. Rev. 1:6 calls us K.D. of priests.

a. #1 - An Elect Race

b. #2 - A Royal Priesthood

c. #3 - A Holy Nation

(1) Again, Peter is quoting from LXX version of Exo. 19:6

Both Royal Priesthood and Holy Nation are exact quotes of Exo. 19:6 in LXX. And again, we have terminology from t/OT that was used of Israel that finds its fulfilled in t/CH. A fulfillment of what Jesus declared to t/Jews in Matt. 21:43 ==>

“ . . . the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

Same thing in Rev. 5:9-10 ==>

9 And they *sang a new song, saying, “Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 “And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Isn't based on physical descent from Abraham // ethnic identity // geographic location, but on grace of JC who reigns as king over this spiritual nation.

TAI - you are part of a nation of Christians and JC is your king! We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20)!

In ancient Rome, 2 millennia ago, a Roman citizen could walk anywhere in t/known world w/o fear. He was protected by "Civis Romanus" - His Roman citizenship.

ISW - we walk w/o fear. Not of citizens of an earthly K.D. but heavenly.

Romans 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

(2) Note the adjectives used

Royal Priesthood; Holy Nation. With citizenship comes responsibility. We have a responsibility toward holiness (cf. 1:14-16).

d. #4 - A People for God's own Possession

KJ = "peculiar people" & according to Webster's "peculiar" means "odd" (as in "strange") & some of you are just that! Actually, our English Word "P" comes from the Latin *pecū-li-āris*, meaning "to possess as private property." That's t/idea. You are God's private property.

(1) Lordship of Christ works both ways

No one can be saved while rejecting X's Lordship. Conversely, no one is saved apart from His right of ownership over him or her.

You were purchased. That's what t/word means. You are his περιποίησις - possession, property.

Verb form of this same word is used in Acts 20:28 where it speaks of the CH which was purchased (περιποιέω) w/the blood of JC.

"God sovereignly elected all who believe, and by Christ's sacrifice on the cross paid the price to redeem them . . . and the Holy Spirit brought them to new life through conviction of sin and faith in the Savior, Therefore, all believers belong to the God who redeemed them." [MacArthur, 130]

1:18-19 {read}

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Rev. 5:9 . . . and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

(2) You belong to God – All of you!

He owns your time // emotions // all of your resources (physical & spiritual). No area of your lives that doesn't belong to him. He is the rightful owner of your physical body & if He chooses to afflict (or to allow that body to be afflicted with) weakness or disease, that's his good pleasure.

He even owns t/hour of your death ==>

Psalm 139:16 . . . in [His] book they were all written, The days that were ordained for [you], When as yet there was not one of them.

You don't possess God; He possesses you! You didn't find God (he wasn't lost!); God found you!

(a) Yet - He doesn't acts capriciously

All that He does is to your good & His glory.

He knows and loves you. The very hairs of your head are numbered (for some of you that's not much of a challenge).

He knows when you hurt: He captures your tears in a bottle –Psalm 56:8.

Psalm 36:7-8 says that God's lovingkindness is precious! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of [His] wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of [His] house; And [He gives] them to drink of the river of [His] delights.

Romans 14:8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

(b) Since he owns us there's no room for pride // bragging

All we are, all we have is a gift. We're so short-sighted of this. Even in

t/CH we applaud men who know much (scholars) or who preach/teach powerfully as if it were all them. We applaud men & women in t/CH as Xn celebrities as if they simply had t/power unto themselves to do great things.

Don't get me wrong, we need to encourage those who labor well; but let's give ultimate credit where credit is due. JC is t/Sov. Lord who has gifted men & women as He pleases. I can't be jealous of how great or gifted someone else may be. To do so is to be dissatisfied w/how God has made me (circumstances) & to act as if God has no right to make one more gifted than another.

And for those who are not as gifted or as prominent: that's okay, too. God has made you who you are. Your personality, gifts, opportunities, knowledge, passions, are all a gift from Him. It pleased Him to make you as He made you, to put you where He wanted you. Be faithful to that.

(c) False Impression . . .

I don't want to give t/impression that if anyone w/i t/sound of my voice doesn't know JC as their L&S - that they don't belong to Him. You may not belong to Him salvationally, but He nonetheless has creative right of ownership over you. You must realize that He holds your eternal soul in t/palm of His hand; He holds you over a great abyss; The only thing separating you from eternal wrath is His good pleasure in allowing you another heartbeat, another breath. I pray that God might open your eyes to repent & believe

I had hoped to finish this section this AM - but we will have to wait until next time to finish v. 9 and 10.