

# OpenTheo

## Kingdom of God (Part 5)



### Kingdom of God - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the concept of being part of the Kingdom of God and what it means to be a "kingdom priest." He explains that being a kingdom priest means being a mediator between God and the world, and that this role is not limited to those in an institutional church. He highlights the responsibilities of priests, including being holy and teaching God's word, and reminds listeners that seeking the kingdom of God should be their primary goal. Additionally, he emphasizes that believers should view everything they have as belonging to God and should offer themselves as living sacrifices to Him.

### Transcript

We are talking tonight about the kingdom of priests concept. The kingdom of God, as Jesus spoke of it, and as the apostles preached of it, is essentially the sum total of those who are submitted to Jesus Christ as their king. That is, in order to have a kingdom, you must have a king and subjects of that king.

You don't have to have territory to have a kingdom. You just have to have a king and people who follow him. We saw at an earlier time that David was anointed to be king at his father's house in Bethlehem, and the spirit of God came upon him, and the spirit of God left the sitting king, Saul.

Saul still sat on the throne, but David was the king as far as God was concerned, and most of the nation followed Saul still. But there were some, initially there were 400, the Bible says, and then their number increased to 600, who recognized that David was the anointed king, the true king that God sponsored, that God endorsed. And they left everything, and they suffered with him because the reigning king, Saul, pursued him with his armies and tried to kill him because he didn't want David to take over the kingdom.

Now, David was not ambitious. He wasn't trying to take over the kingdom, but it was inevitable. God had ordained that David would take over the kingdom.

David was making no moves in that direction. In fact, he was moving in the other direction, running away from Saul. Most of the nation followed Saul, but there were a

small number, I think we could say a remnant in Israel, who did follow David, who did, it says, they made him their captain.

That means they put themselves under his command, and they were with him during the time of his persecution and humiliation. And then later on, when he came to power and was universally recognized as king throughout all the land, those who had been with him during his time of being persecuted ended up in cabinet positions and being his privileged ones. Now, the Bible indicates that Jesus has been anointed as king also.

At his baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon him as the Holy Spirit came upon David when he was anointed. And God said out loud, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. The disciples were that remnant in Israel who followed Jesus.

Now, of course, Jesus was popular initially, but then he became very unpopular. But they continued with him, just like those 400 and 600 men followed David during the time when he was persecuted. The disciples were persecuted.

They were persecuted by the Sanhedrin. They were persecuted by the Roman government. They've been persecuted virtually everywhere they've ever gone.

Until this country was founded, Christians were in danger everywhere. We have come to think that exemption from persecution, which is all we've ever known, exemption is all we've ever known, that that's kind of normative. It isn't normative.

It's strange in terms of history. It's even strange in terms of much of the world today. If you are a Christian in the Sudan or in some Muslim countries, you'd know the time of persecution is not over.

So this time of what we might call the age of the church is a time where Christ and his followers are persecuted. At this moment, we have a refuge here, maybe a little longer, maybe a long time more. I don't know.

Maybe not much longer. In any case, it is still unpopular vis-à-vis the dominant culture to really take an uncompromising stand for Christ. Therefore, we live at that time that corresponds with David's period of humiliation and persecution before he was recognized universally.

But there will also be time when Jesus' kingliness is universally recognized. When, as it says in Revelation chapter 11, verse 15, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign forever. And Paul said, if we endure, we will reign with him.

And so the time will come where the saints possess the kingdom, said Daniel. That time has not come, but the kingdom has come. The kingdom has come in the sense that there is a king and he has subjects.

But it is, as we saw last time, like a kingdom that was like a mustard seed, very small, Jesus said, but growing into a great tree to fill the whole earth. Or like a little leaven, a pinch of leaven put into six measures or three measures of meal, Jesus said, and it leavens the whole lump. The kingdom of God began very small with just Jesus, the king, and a few subjects in the first century.

And it expanded and it continues to expand like the growing seed into a great tree or like the leaven spreading throughout the lump. And eventually, according to scripture. All the nations of the world will bow the knee to Jesus.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the father. And Jesus will reign where the sun doth its excesses courses run and all the kings of the earth will be made to acknowledge who he is. That's kind of a summary of what we've gone over before.

Now we want to talk about this aspect of the kingdom. The first four lectures were devoted to understand the concept of the kingdom of God. I want to talk now about the practical aspects of the kingdom of God to us.

And that's what the next four lectures will be about. This one focuses on that concept of the kingdom being a kingdom of priests. And we see in the very first mention in the Bible of the kingdom.

And I've mentioned this first just about every week so far, because it's significant when you're looking at an important biblical subject. Often the very first mention of that subject in the Bible gives you a pivot point from which to choose a trajectory of study and research. Certainly the first time God mentioned the kingdom of God was here in Exodus, chapter 19, verses five and six.

When Israel had come out of Egypt and had come to Sinai and God made a covenant with them, he said, Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people. For all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

So this is the promise, the covenant. With conditions stated that was given to Israel, the promise was they could be a kingdom of priests. It's interesting that the first time God ever mentions himself having a kingdom, he uses this expression kingdom of priests.

Now, we've been talking about the kingdom from many different angles, from many different scriptures, but we haven't locked on to this concept. What's that mean, a kingdom of priests? Now, by the way, he says, and a holy nation. There's really no difference between a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

A priesthood was the holy people in a society devoted, separated, as the word holy

means, separated to the service of their God. So. They were the priests were the holy ones, a kingdom is like a nation.

And priests are holy ones, so a holy nation, a nation where everyone is holy. Is a kingdom comprised of priests. Now, this concept is a really important and unique thing in the in the days when this was suggested, and it still is to this day, because we are we are accustomed living in America to having a separation of church and state.

There is no state religion in the United States. It was one of the important, you know, distinctives about this country when it was founded, that the founders did not want there to be a state religion, didn't want there to be the federal government establishing some religion for everybody. So people are free to choose what they believe.

That was a very interesting innovation. 250 years ago or whenever that was, because forever before that, there were only religious nations. In the biblical times, in Abraham's time, even in medieval times, every nation had an official religion.

In the time of Abraham and the Old Testament patriarchs. And Moses time that Israel was surrounded by nations like, well, Egypt and Moab and Ammon and Edom and and Syria. And eventually a Syria came in and Babylon and the Greeks and the Romans.

All of these nations were political nations, but they all had state religions. They all had their official gods of their societies. And they had within each nation a priesthood.

That was there were some special people in every nation in in Moab. There were a group of people separated to Chumash, their god, the national god. In Phoenicia, there were priests of Baal.

Unfortunately, the princess of Phoenicia became the queen of Israel and brought Baal worship into Israel, too. But there were priests of Baal. There were priests of every religion in Egypt.

There were priests of Ra and of all the gods of Egypt. Now, Israel also had a priesthood within it. But Israel was unique in this respect.

Israel also was a kingdom of priests, at least potentially. And ideally, that's what God had in mind for them. But what does a priest to do? What is a priest? Now, if you were raised in a liturgical church, like maybe Roman Catholic or Orthodox or maybe Episcopal church where they have priests.

You might just think, well, a priest, that's kind of like a different name for a pastor. Some churches call them priests. Some churches call them pastors.

Some call them something else. Now, a priest and a pastor are not the same thing. The word pastor means a shepherd.

The word priest means a mediator. A priest mediates between human beings and God. Human beings who cannot go directly to God themselves, they come through a mediator who's called a priest.

And so a priest in any society, no matter what religion the society has, the priest mediates between the God of that religion and the ordinary people. And the priests are themselves set apart for that service. They have to fit certain criteria in order to really have that privileged closeness to the deity and to have that kind of privileged elite status in the society.

Now, that's because in every country there was a religion and the priesthood mediated between the God of that religion and the rest of the people in that society. And as I said, that was true in Israel also. When God established Israel, the Levites and the sons of Aaron were the priests.

But the whole nation was to be a nation of priests. Well, to whom? If you've got a whole kingdom, a whole nation that as a whole is a priesthood. Well, who is that nation mediating between? Certainly between God, because he says you'll be a kingdom of priests to me.

But then who's on the other side of that mediation? You've got God, you've got the priesthood. Who's out there? The world is out there. Israel was to be that priesthood that intervened between God and the rest of the world.

That didn't change the fact that Israel had its own internal political structure and religious structure, its own priesthood within it. But as a whole, Israel was called to be a priestly nation that had a priestly function to all the nations of the world. They were supposed to reach out to the world eventually.

God chose a priestly nation in order that he might have a relationship with people who were outside that nation through their mediation. Peter says in first Peter two, nine, he says, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. Now, royal, of course, speaks of related to the kingdom.

And a holy nation. Well, that term holy nation is directly taken from Exodus 19, we just saw. And royal priesthood is conceptually essentially the same as a kingdom of priests.

It's a priesthood that's royal. It's associated with kingliness. Now, it's obvious that Peter is saying to the church what God said to Israel in the Old Testament.

Why? Because God said Israel, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be these things. Well, they didn't. They not only didn't keep his first covenant when Jesus came to establish a second covenant, they killed him.

And therefore. Jesus said to the leaders of Israel in Matthew 21, 43, he said, the kingdom

of God is taken from you and is given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it. A nation.

Yes, a holy nation. What is that holy nation? It is what is properly called the church. And as I said last week, we don't want to confuse the word church with necessarily the institutional church, though there is an overlap between what is the true church and what is the institutional church.

The true church is made up of those who are the body of Jesus. He's their head. And of course, you can tell if somebody's part of the body of a head by whether they do what the head wants them to do.

Can't you? You can tell that these fingers are my fingers and not yours, because my fingers right now are doing what my head wants them to do, not what yours wants them to do. You know which body a person belongs to by who they are obeying, which head. If you're part of the true church of Jesus Christ, it's because you are obeying Jesus Christ.

He's your head in any church that's got more than a few dozen people. You're going to find some there who don't have any intention to obey Jesus. They're there for other reasons.

They've got other agendas. They may not even know what they're for, but they're not there to obey Jesus Christ. But the world over, there is a company of people that God knows.

God knows who they are, who are committed to Jesus Christ as their king, like the men who followed David. Jesus is their captain. They recognize that he has the oil upon him, the anointing of God upon him, that he has been declared king.

And they have said, if he's been declared king by God, then he's my king. I don't care how unpopular that stand becomes. He's going to be my king anyway.

I don't care what it's going to cost me. He's my king. He's my head.

And therefore, I'm a member of his body, a member of his kingdom. Peter says to the Christians, the true Christians, as you are a royal priesthood. What was offered to Israel is now given to another nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

And those fruits are going to be defined in the same terms as the assignment that was given to Israel being a priesthood. Revelation one, six. In one of the opening verses in the prologue of Revelation, it says to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests.

Now, that's how the King James reads, because the textus receptus, one group of manuscripts reads that way, kings and priests, the Alexandrian text, which most modern

translations follows as a kingdom of priests. Now, you might say, well, which one is it? Well, no one knows for sure. I mean, we don't have the original handwritten autograph by John of the Book of Revelation.

We only have manuscript copies. And some say kings and priests and some say a kingdom of priests. Obviously, the original said one of those two things.

And one of the sets of manuscripts messed it up. My call, which is not totally authoritative, but it's my judgment call, is that kingdom of priests is what was originally there. And that the textus receptus probably is wrong in rendering it kings and priests.

Why? Well, if it is kings and priests, it's the only place in the whole Bible that speaks of Christians today as being kings. We will reign with him, but the Bible does not say that we are kings now. In fact, Paul rebukes the Corinthians in first Corinthians four because they're living as kings.

He says, I wish you could live as kings because then I'd be reigning with you. In other words, I wish the time had come when we would all be kings together. But it's not here yet.

But the point is kingdom of priests, which is in some manuscripts, is, of course, a line directly from Exodus. And the book of Revelation has a lot of lines elsewhere directly from Exodus. And it seems like the book of Exodus inform much of the language of Revelation.

So I'm going to I'm going to just make a call and side with the Alexandria text in this case. I don't always. But he has made us a kingdom of priests to his God, the father to him.

Be glory and dominion forever and ever. Who has he made a kingdom of priests? Well, here's another passage in Revelation. Got the same problem with the text.

But in Revelation five, verses nine and 10, it says they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals for you are slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood. Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, this is starting to become easy to identify who's talking here and have made us a kingdom of priests to our God. And we shall reign on the earth.

Well, whoever it is that has been made a kingdom of priests have been redeemed out of every kindred nation and tongue. And we would have to say that sounds suspiciously like the church. So the church, I believe, is unambiguously declared to be not only the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of priests, which Israel had the opportunity to be, but refused to be.

Now, I want to talk about this. There's an outline in the notes gave you. I want to talk

about several points.

I want to talk, first of all, about the priest's calling. This statement in Hebrews chapter five is not about priests in general, but it's technically a statement about the high priest. I can't help that.

The writer of Hebrews was writing about the high priest, not about the priests in general. But the statement he made is true of all the priests of Israel. It just happens that he's talking about the high priest here.

But in Hebrews five, one and then skipping to verse four says, for every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. In other words, being a priest is not something that a person runs for the office.

You can't run for the office of priest. You can't get in through nepotism because you had an uncle who was a priest. Legitimate priesthood can't be bought, can't be obtained by popular demand, can't be finagled, can't be given as a favor by some friend.

God alone will determine who will approach him. And who will represent him. To those outside, if a priest mediates between God and people, God is the one who reserves the right to decide who will do that for him.

Only those who are chosen by God do so. Now, there's a special privilege that priests have that no one else has. We can see this in what was offered to the priesthood in Israel, the Levites and the family of Aaron.

This is some numbers 1820 states it, but the same thing is stated many times in the Pentateuch in the first five books of the Bible. God repeats this idea many times. We'll only look at one case because there's only need to look at one to get the point.

The Lord said to Aaron, who is the high priest, the father of the other priests, you shall have no inheritance in their land. That is in the land of Israel, nor shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

Now, the idea that God can be your inheritance, God can be what you possess, not land, not earthly possessions. God, that will either sound like a bad deal to you or it'll sound like a really exciting deal to you. And of course, that depends on where your heart's at toward God.

I got a feeling there's a lot of people say that doesn't sound like a very good deal. I get God and everyone else gets property, real estate. Give me the real estate.

Well, you can have real estate. You can have the world. Do you know everything has its



price tag? There's Jesus calling us and there's the world calling us.

And you can have either one. You can have Jesus, but it'll cost you the world. Or you can have the world, but it'll cost you Jesus.

You can have God or you can have the world. It says in James, you adulterers, adulterers, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity, hostility toward God? Now, of course, the world there doesn't mean necessarily physicality and possessions in general. It has to do more with the spirit of the world, the pursuits of the world, the values of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, which John says is all that is in the world.

But if you want to go for those things, they're available. You might not get them. You might pursue them with all your heart and still not get as much as you want of them.

But you can try. But you'll be an enemy of God. Because friendship of the world is enmity with God.

In First John, chapter two, I don't have slides for this. I'll just give it to you. First, first, John two, verses 15 through 17.

It says, Beloved, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. You might say, well, frankly, I kind of like I kind of I have some worldly goals.

I'm not real eager to give up. And if all I get back is God. Then I think I'll pass on that.

If you're not jazzed about God, you don't qualify. He doesn't want you. I'm not saying he doesn't want you.

He wishes you would be jazzed. He doesn't want halfhearted people. Jesus called a rich young ruler to follow him.

You might remember. Now, this man would have been a great church elder. He was already the ruler of the synagogue.

I mean, he was the president of the synagogue meetings. And he was very moral. Jesus said, you need to keep the law.

Which ones? He says, well, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. He said, I've done all that since my youth.

And this guy had a great reputation. He was a rich ruler. Let's face it.

What church wouldn't put that guy in the eldership? But Jesus said, Jesus said, you lack one thing. Sell all you have and give to the poor and then come follow me. And the Bible

says the man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

He had a choice between following Jesus or following the world. He chose the world. And you know what? Jesus was sorry to see him go, too.

But, you know, Jesus didn't chase after him. So, you know, hey, wait, hey, hey, hey, wait. I perhaps dumped too much on you a little too soon there.

You know, I realize that sometimes, see, we got to take this gently. Why don't you just follow me? We'll just have you tithe for a while. And then, you know, as you see that God prospers you and you can afford it, maybe we can bump it up a little to 15%.

And maybe we can work it up that way. But we don't want to lose you, man. You're a fish we want to keep on the line here.

You'd be a real asset to our movement. Jesus didn't say anything like that. Jesus let him go.

He said, it's all or nothing because if I'm not worth everything to you, I'm not worth enough to you for you to be involved in this. It's all about Jesus. It's all about God.

It doesn't mean you can't have a house and a car and a job and things like that. Those may be exactly the things God calls you to have and use for his kingdom. But you can't say these are the things I want.

Jesus said, seek first what? The kingdom of God and his righteousness. And then what will happen? Everything else will be added to you. Everything will be added to you.

I want to testify to you that is true. And I didn't intend to say this, but somebody asked me beforehand about my financial situation. I just want you to know when I went into the ministry, I was 17 years old.

And I had to decide how I was going to live because I left home when I was 17 years old. And I decided to live like Jesus did or like the apostles did. And I couldn't tell that anyone was paying them a paycheck.

I couldn't see any organization drafting Jesus a paycheck every two weeks or the apostles a paycheck. It looked to me like Jesus just concerned himself about doing his father's business and God somehow took care of stuff for him. So that sounds like the right thing to do.

And so I decided I'm going to do the same thing, which I've done for 35, 36 years now. And I want to tell you something. There's only one concern that's ever really been a concern to me.

And that is, am I in the will of God? Is God pleased with what I'm doing? Is what I'm doing

promoting the kingdom of God? Because Jesus said, seek the kingdom of God, and you won't have to seek anything else. And I have found that to be true. I live a debt-free life.

I haven't had debt for years. Nobody knows my needs, and no one ever will except God. For 35 years, I've never told anyone my needs.

I don't send out a newsletter. I don't ever give people a hint if I'm low on money, and I'm not. I'll give you a hint that I'm not so you know I'm not trying to manipulate anything here.

God knows. And I believe that what Jesus said is literally true. If you seek the kingdom of God first, everything else you need will be added to you.

I've raised five children without debt. God provides. All I'm trying to say, I'm not trying to say anything about me.

I'm trying to say something about God here. I'm trying to say, if you pursue the kingdom of God, you might think, well, it's not practical to think that if you just pursue the kingdom of God that your bills will be paid. Try it.

I tried it. It's worked for 36 years for me, and it's going to work the rest of my life, too, because God's not going to die in the meantime. And I'm not going to retire.

But let me make this clear. Seeking the kingdom of God doesn't mean you have a Christian radio show necessarily doesn't mean that you teach the Bible necessarily as a Bible teacher vocationally. What it means is that you have only one concern in your life.

Only one. Remember Martha, who is doing so much for Jesus and the disciples in the kitchen? And she was so upset because Mary was just sitting around listening to Jesus. And she said, Jesus, tell my sister to help out in the kitchen.

She said, listen, Martha, you're concerned about so many things. There's only one thing needed. There's only one thing you need.

And that's the will of God. The most secure place you can be is not in a cabin out in the wilderness during dangerous times. It's not being surrounded by the National Guard.

The safest place you can be is in the middle of the will of God for you. And that can mean that you're the president of a corporation. It might mean you're flipping hamburgers.

It might mean that you're pumping gas. If that's what God has called you to do and you know you're doing it because God wants you there, you're seeking the kingdom of God by being there. If he wants you to be single, if he wants you to be home raising kids, as long as what you're doing is what you have reason to believe.

This is what God has positioned me to do. This is my sphere of service to God. God needs

priests wherever unbelievers are.

Because priests need to mediate between him and the world. It's not that you have to go off away from the job or away from society and be a monk or something. Seeking first the kingdom of God just means that you make sure that as far as you're concerned, you're doing exactly what the king wants you to do right now.

And that you train your heart to care only about whether your king is pleased with you. If you read the book of Esther, she was promoted to being queen and God really honored her. It's really interesting when you read the book of Esther, how often she uses this statement whenever she speaks to her husband, who was a king.

She says, if it please the king, if it please the king. I read the book of Esther lately. Count up how many times you read, if it please the king.

I remember there was once years ago, I was a young man, single, in love with somebody who didn't love me. And it suddenly dawned on me, I'm not going to be with this woman. And I was very grieved over it.

And I was praying, saying, God, why, why, why? She's a godly woman. I'm a godly man. She's available.

She likes me as a friend. It's why can't this happen? And God, I feel, spoke to me. And I don't feel he does very often.

I don't hear voices, generally speaking. But I felt like I got a word to my spirits. And the word was this, it does not please the king.

That was all I needed to hear. That's all you need to hear. God, why can't I have, if it doesn't please the king.

That's the end of the discussion. You have to remember what it means to have a king. We're very fortunate in some ways to not live under a monarchy in America.

But we have lost some things. Like the point of reference that every society throughout history had until there was a free country like ours. Every country knew what a king was.

We don't. When we think word king, we think of an oppressor, a tyrant. But a king, if he's not a bad king, is someone who is caring for, protecting, and watching over those who are subject to him.

And his resources are available to them. But they are available to him too. They have no agendas other than to please their king.

That's what being in the kingdom of God means. Now, a priest has to be in that position. And if they are, they have this privilege.

Their inheritance is not in this world. Their inheritance is not of the things of this world. Their inheritance is God.

You, if you are in the kingdom of God, you get to possess God. If that doesn't turn you on, maybe you don't have any switches. I don't know.

I'll tell you what. Nothing can motivate me to do anything but to know that if I do that, I'll be closer to God. I'll have communion with God.

Anything that would take me another direction, I don't care what it costs me. I don't know what it'll give me. I don't want it.

I don't want anything that's going to take me further from God because it's the supreme privilege of those in his kingdom to be near the king and to have him, to be in relationship with him, to be among his confidants. Remember, Jesus in the upper room says to the disciples, I don't even call you servants anymore. I call you friends because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but I'm making known to you everything that the father has shown me, being in his close confidence.

Now, someone says, well, he said, well, we're not servants then. We're friends. So we don't have to serve him.

Well, no, you have to understand the verse before that. He says, you are my friends if you do everything I command you. That's a different kind of friendship.

He's a king who is a friend to his people, to his subjects, and that's the privilege his subjects have, is to be friends with the king, to be acquainted with God. That's what the privilege of being a priest is, what's what it involves. But there's also, of course, responsibilities.

Wherever there's privilege, there's responsibility. I'd like to talk about the various responsibilities of priests here, and they're all laid out both in the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament, of course, we have the types and shadows of the new.

And so the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament, is a type, but the principles are there. Because when the New Testament says you are priests, it's speaking to people who have the context of the Old Testament priesthood as their referent. And so, and they say, OK, I'm a priest.

What's that mean? Oh, I remember there was Aaron. There were his sons. They were priests.

I see what that's about. And so we need to look at what that was about. So we'll know what that's about.

And we'll find that for each of these duties, there are statements in the Old Testament

describing the duties of the priest. But we'll find the New Testament reaffirms those as the responsibilities that we have. The first responsibility of a priest was to be holy.

Now, I've already said something about this, though I didn't use the word holy as much as I'm going to in the next few sentences. The statement in Leviticus 21, verses 1 and 6, is simply characteristic of dozens of statements in the Old Testament about the priests. It says, The Lord said to Moses, speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, none shall defile himself.

They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire and bread of their God. Therefore, they shall be holy.

Being holy is the obligation, the first responsibility of the priest. There are other things priests do, but if they do those things and they are not holy, it's not OK. You know, it says in the Proverbs several times, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God.

What's a sacrifice? Priests offer sacrifice. That's one thing priests do. But what if a wicked priest does it? Well, that's an abomination to God, because the priest has the obligation first to be holy.

His other duties flow from that, but being holy is what qualifies him to do the other things. Now, I want to clarify to you what being holy means, because sometimes we have very strange ideas of what it means to be holy. Whenever the Bible talks about his people being holy, it talks about them being holy to the Lord.

The word holy really is a we think of it as kind of a religious kind of a word, but holy is a word that simply means set apart. The Greek word and the Hebrew word in the Old Testament for holy both mean they mean set apart, set apart for divine service, actually. And we sometimes think, well, being holy means you don't wear any makeup and being holy means you don't watch TV and being holy means you drive an old beater of a car instead of a nice car and being holy means you kind of look kind of you dress kind of frumpy and being holy.

No, that's not what being holy is. Being holy means you're separated to God. You know, being holy is not first and foremost a way of behaving.

It filters down into a way of behaving, as we shall see. But the first meaning of holy is not about behavior. It's about being set apart for something.

That's why in the Old Testament there were holy cups and spoons and holy tables and stuff like that, because they were set apart for use in the tabernacle. They couldn't be used for anything else. The fact that something is holy means it's set apart for something and it cannot be used for anything other than what it's set apart for.

The priests were holy. The high priest wore a gold plate on his head that said holiness

unto the Lord to remind him that he was holy. If you lived in Israel in those days and your ancestors were descended from Aaron and you are a man, there weren't female priests, but there were females who worked in the tabernacle and who were separated to the Lord.

But if you were a male descended from Aaron at any time prior to 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed, you were born a priest. And as a priest, you were set apart for God. Now, your neighbors who were not related to Aaron, they could go out and do what they wanted.

They could go out and be carpenters or plumbers or soldiers or politicians. They could do whatever they wanted to. But if you were a son of Aaron, you were born for one thing.

You couldn't decide I'm going to be a fisherman or a tax collector. You had to be a priest because you were set apart by God for that and for nothing else. That's what holy means.

It's too sacred to be used for anything else. And it's not sacred because the priests were not sacred because they behaved well, because sometimes they didn't behave well. In fact, they almost never did.

Even Aaron himself made a golden calf just after, you know, right after he got started. I mean, the priests were almost never good, but they were always holy. And what that means is that God set them apart to serve God.

If they were bad, they were cheating God. They were violating. They were doing something sacrilegious because they were taking that which was holy and using it for common things.

You know, there was holy fire in the temple on the day that the tabernacle was set up and established. Two of the priests, Nadab and Abihu, who couple the sons of Aaron, they had the duty of burning incense as an offering to the Lord in the tabernacle. And the protocol was you go over to this altar here.

There's this altar where God had sent fire from heaven and ignited. This is in the ninth chapter of Leviticus. God sent fire from heaven, ignited the fire in this altar, and it was kept burning forever.

They weren't supposed to let it go out because this was divinely originated fire. And the priests were supposed to take coals from that fire and put incense with it in these golden incense burners and go into the tabernacle and burn those in front of the golden altar. Now, Nadab and Abihu thought, well, you know what? I wonder what would happen if we used ordinary fire to burn the incense.

It probably worked just the same. Incense would smell just the same, burned by regular

fire as by holy fire. And so they said, let's try that.

So the Bible says they went and got strange fire, which means foreign, different, not the holy fire. They didn't use the holy fire. They got strange fire from somewhere else, and they took the incense in to burn it before the Lord.

And sure enough, the incense burned right up along with them, because the Bible says fire came out from the presence of God and incinerated them into ashes in a moment. And Aaron, their father, was, of course, speechless, astounded. He's got two of his sons just dead and for what seems to be a minor infraction.

And you know what God's first words were to Moses? He said, I will be regarded as holy by those who approach me. We sometimes are so arrogant as to think that God is like us. In Psalm 50, God says, you thought that I was altogether such a one as yourselves.

Well, that is the supreme miscalculation. When people say, well, why does that be only through Jesus that we're saved? Why can't we come through whatever religion we want? Well, because you don't have any right to come to God at all. No one has any right to come to God.

If God says you can come to me, but it has to be this way. You don't say, well, what if we try this strange fire over here, this strange fire over here? Well, try it. See what the fire of God does.

Ultimately, you see, we don't innovate with God. He's God. We're holy under the Lord.

And we he will be regarded as holy and wants us to be separated to him. Now, that means that if you if your daily duties involve things like working at a regular job, well, you work unto the Lord. The people sitting in the desks around you are working unto their boss, unto their paycheck.

You're working unto the Lord. You get a paycheck, too. And that's how the Lord provides for you in that service.

But but you're working for the Lord. Whatever you do, you're doing for the Lord. Romans 14, seven through nine says, for none of us lives to himself and no one dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord. If we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die and Paul doesn't sound like he cares much which way it goes live, die.

Who cares? It's all for the Lord. What does it matter to me if I die? I don't belong to me. My living or dying is all just to the Lord.

If it pleases the Lord, we die. Well, let it be. Well, does he want me to be rich? Well, does he want me to be poor? Fine.



Who cares that he want me sick or well, that's that's his business, not mine, isn't it? I'll feel it. I'll feel the effects of his will, but it's his problem. I'm his problem.

And I'm a big problem sometimes. But the fact is. I had a situation once where somebody was.

Betraying me in a very harmful way. And there's nothing I could do about it. I was just agonizing in it.

And I'd say, God, there's nothing I can do about this. And I thought, well, wait a minute. I'm not my own.

Therefore, my problems are not my own. I mean, I belong to God. All my problems belong to God.

So I just say, God, this person is your problem, not mine. I'm your servant. I'm your slave.

I don't have any problems. I can't have any problems because I don't own me. I don't own anything.

You own me. So whatever I've got is yours, including my problems. That's I don't own any problems.

And I can live a carefree life as long as I'm willing to say not my will. But yours be done because I'm holy unto the Lord. I'm separated to him and his will.

There's nothing else that matters. Nothing else matters. And it doesn't matter what my vocation is in terms of daily making my living.

I'm the Lord's. If I live, if I die, doesn't matter. We're the Lord's.

For to this end, Christ died and rose again and lived again that he might be the Lord. Both of the dead and the living. So whether you live or die, he's still the Lord.

And the Lord makes the choices. The Lord makes the decisions. First Peter, chapter one, verses 14 through 16.

Peter said, as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts as in your ignorance, but as he who called you is holy. You also be holy in all of your conduct because it is written. Be holy for I'm holy.

Now, I've mentioned holiness is not primarily about conduct. It's firstly about being separated to God. But of course, that trickles down to conduct.

How could it not? He says you need to be holy in all your conduct. All of your conduct needs to conform to the fact that you belong to a holy God and he has made you holy

unto himself. You're part of a holy nation.

You're a priest. And it's your duty to be holy. Psalm 15 talks about who can have the privilege to approach God and be in his tabernacle.

Well, of course, the priests were the ones who did that. Let me just read it. I wanted to comment, but I won't.

I'll just read it. I think I won't. Lord, who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? That's the place the priests occupied.

He who walks uprightly, who works righteousness, who speaks the truth in his heart. He who does not backbite with his tongue. It's getting kind of meddlesome here.

We left preaching and gone to meddling here. Nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend in whose eyes a vile person is despised. But he honors those who fear the Lord.

He who swears to his own hurt and does not change. He who does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved from where? From God's tabernacle.

From the place where you want to be. You won't be moved from there if you do these things. Why? Because you're keeping your nose clean.

You're holy in your conduct as well as in your position. You're living consistently with your calling and your position. You're called to be a priest and you're living a holy life.

That's swearing to your own hurt and not changing is very important. It means if you say you're going to do something, you do it. Even if it's to your own hurt to do it.

Even if you have found it'll cost you more to keep your word than to break it. Your integrity before God is worth more than anything it could cost you. If I had time, I'd give you some stories for that had to be.

That was a costly verse for me to obey on many occasions. Because you make well. Here's the big one.

You marry somebody. Did you swear to your own hurt? Well, you swore. You took an oath.

Took a vow. Did you swear to your own hurt? Well, it depends. Was your spouse everything you thought they were before you married him? Did it turn out as good as you thought it would be? Well, I hope so.

Some of you could say yes, but a lot of you would say, no, I was a little disappointed with

things turned out. Well, what did you do about it? Break your oath? Or keep it? I was married to a woman who committed adultery on multiple occasions and told me about it and didn't repent. Just kept doing it.

I had grounds for divorce, but I thought of this verse. It's only one of many times this verse had a lot to do with my behavior. He who swears to his own hurt.

It hurt. It hurt to keep that marriage vow to that woman. But I wanted to dwell in God's tabernacle.

My integrity is worth more to me than anything else that I could barter it for. I won't take anything in exchange for it. I don't care how much it hurts.

I'm going to keep my promises. Why? Because I want to live in that tabernacle. The second thing that is a duty of priest is to teach God's word.

Now, not everyone's a vocational teacher. I teach, that's what I do. Not everyone does that.

But, you see, the idea is if you're going to mediate between God and the rest of the world, part of that is to tell them what God's about and what he's interested in, what he expects of them, what his claims are upon them. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 10, verses 10 through 11, it says, Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, That you may distinguish between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them. That is, the priests.

The priests had the job of teaching Israel the statutes. Why? Because they couldn't run down to the local Bible bookstore and pick up a Bible. They didn't have Bible bookstores.

They didn't have printing presses. They didn't have Bibles. The priests had the scrolls of the law.

And they're the only people on the planet who had them. And, therefore, the priests had to teach Israel. Do you know that every seven years, every person in Israel had to present themselves before the priests and stand while the entire law was read to them? The first five books of the Bible was read out loud by the priests to them.

And then in Ezra's day, we see an example of the priests then expounding on them, explaining the meaning, giving the sense of them, because the people didn't know what God's law was unless the priests told them. It says in Malachi 2 and verse 7, For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. One of the duties of priests is to teach people what God has required.

And what's Matthew 28, 19 and 20 say to the church? What's our commission? Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Why? Because we're a nation of priests to them. Baptized in the name of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

You see, the kingdom of priests has the same duty as the priests did back then to teach others what God has commanded. How will they know otherwise? How will your neighbors know? How will the nations know? How will anyone who doesn't have a Bible know, or who doesn't read one, know what God expects of them? You tell them. Now, that doesn't mean everyone's an evangelist in the same sense.

Paul said he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, not all. But Peter did say you must be prepared to give anyone an answer who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you. And the idea is that you know something the world needs to know.

Your activities day by day may put you in more or less situations where you really have opportunity to say something about God, but you need to be prepared to do so anytime, and eager to do so, if there's a possibility of doing so. Now, you might go a week without ever coming near anyone who gives you the opportunity to speak to them about God. Other people are in full-time ministry and do it all the time.

But the point is it should be your understanding that one reason I'm on this planet is I'm a priest of God, a messenger of the Lord, to teach the nations the Word of God, to teach them who Jesus is, what the Lordship of Jesus, what that claim is upon them, what he expects, to teach them to observe all things he commanded. Not everyone does that to the same extent. But if you understand that that's your commission, you'll have the mindset of doing that when the opportunity arises.

I'm not an evangelist myself. I love evangelism. I love doing it.

I love to preach the gospel to unbelievers. There's nothing I enjoy more than arguing with an unbeliever. But the fact is I don't get that many opportunities.

I taught a Bible college for years full-time. I didn't have much time. Everyone around me was Christians.

I do a radio show that's mainly Christians calling, not very many non-Christians. But when I'm in town, I'm always looking for an opportunity. But I don't usually go and buttonhole somebody because I'm not really an evangelist.

But I love it when I can get in a conversation and they end up showing an interest in something, even remotely related to God, that I can say something about because it's so exciting. And I'm not an evangelist. Maybe you're not an evangelist.

But there are opportunities to speak. Jesus said, anyone who's ashamed of me, before

this wicked, you know, adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of them before my father. You don't want to be ashamed of Jesus.

Priests have no reason to be ashamed of God. Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel in Romans 1.16. He says, it is the power of God for salvation. Well, that's certainly nothing to be ashamed of, the power of God.

That's like if I'm walking around carrying a .44 Magnum, you know, and somebody comes up to me with a knife and wants to rob me. I'm not ashamed of what I'm packing. He's got the reason to be ashamed, not me.

He brought a knife to a gunfight. That's dumb. That's dumb.

And we have the gospel, which is the power of God. That's more powerful than an atom bomb. Anyone who comes against us with philosophies and arguments and so forth, they don't know that we have weapons that are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds and casting down arguments and bringing every thought into captivity.

They come into contact with us, they're asking for trouble. Because we've got the power of God. Is that something to be ashamed of? That's something to be delighted in.

That's a privilege. We are entrusted with the word of God to tell the nations. Aren't you glad somebody told you about Jesus somewhere along the line? Well, there's people out there that'll be glad if you tell them.

Same as you're glad. Some won't be glad, but that's for them to be ashamed of, not you. Now, here's one of the main things that priests did, and that is they offered up sacrifices.

That's really the main duty of the priest in the tabernacle, was to offer animals, lambs, goats, and so forth, and incense, burning up incense, offering that up to the Lord. There were various kinds of sacrifices. Grain sometimes was offered to the Lord.

But we don't have an altar, and we don't have a tabernacle, and we don't have animals that we offer. We know that Jesus was this sacrificed lamb, and he brought an end to the sacrificial system. Well, he brought an end to one of the sacrificial systems.

He instituted another, and that is the sacrifices that we are to offer. Peter says in 1 Peter 2, 5, You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. He means a temple of the Holy Spirit.

A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Now, remember, sacrifices are part of the priest's way of mediating between the world and God. When you teach the word of God to people, you are speaking for God to them.

When you offer sacrifices, you're approaching God on their behalf. The priest would take, if I had sinned under Israel's economy, I'd bring a lamb, the priest would take the lamb,

he'd slit the throat, drain out the blood, cut out the entrails, and so forth, and he'd burn it on the altar on my behalf to God so that God might pay attention to my sacrifice and might absolve me of my guilt, and so forth. And so the priest, when he offers sacrifice, is mediating on behalf of people to God.

And Peter says we offer up spiritual sacrifices, and these take several forms according to the New Testament. The first, I think, and most important, or at least initially, is that which we all know about from Romans 12.1. Probably all of you can quote this verse in one translation or another. Paul says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

The term reasonable service is translated in some translations, spiritual worship, and this is legitimate. Remember Jesus said God is seeking those who worship him in spirit and in truth. So part of your spiritual worship is that you present your body to God.

Now a priest presented a lamb or a bull or a goat on an altar. Now these animals, you see, they'd put them on the altar, but they'd tie them there and kill them, and the blood would drain out and the animal would burn up to God. It's more difficult with a living sacrifice because a living sacrifice always has the tendency to crawl off the altar.

You kill an animal, it won't crawl off the altar. Some people are willing to die for Jesus, they think, but living for Jesus, they're not too good at that. Why? Because to die for Jesus takes one decision made one time.

Someone comes in here and says, do you believe in God? Yes. Boom. That was easy for you.

But what if they don't? Boom. What if they say, OK, prove it. I'm going to watch you the rest of your life.

And we'll see if you believe in God or not. And I'm going to make my decision about whether God's real by what I see in you. Well, now you've got an assignment.

Now you've got a problem. Because it's easy when you go to the revival meeting or to the church meeting or to the Christmas program to get all feeling good and say, yes, God, you know, I'm all yours. That moment you're on the altar.

Then you go home. Your spouse is in a bad mood or your neighbors upset with you about something your kids did or something. And and then suddenly, you know, are you still on the altar? Trouble is, you're alive.

You're a living sacrifice. And being alive means you can crawl off the altar. Not allowed to, but you might anyway.

What does it mean to present your body as a sacrifice? Where's the altar? Where do you put it? The priest in the Old Testament knew exactly where to take the animal. There's an altar right there in Jerusalem, right there in the, you know, in the outer court of the temple. Where do you go to present your sacrifice? Well, Paul, in the same epistle, I think, gives us a little help in that.

Romans 6, 13. The word present there is the same Greek word that's found in Romans 12, 1. He says, and do not present your members. That means the parts of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.

And your members as the members of your body as instruments of righteousness to God. Now, the word instruments there actually in the Greek, the literal translation of word instruments would be armaments like weapons. Don't present your members of your body as weapons on the side of unrighteousness in this cosmic battle.

Present your members as instruments or weapons on the side of righteousness. In other words, you come to God and say, here's my members, my hands, my eyes, my mouth, my talents, whatever I have, whatever I've got. The strength I've got, it's presented.

It's yours. Now, when you put something on an altar, it's not yours anymore. Do you know that if you lived in Israel and you brought a lamb to offer as a sacrifice and you bring up to the priest, he's just about to take it and put it on the altar.

But your kids is, oh, but that is my favorite lamb. Could we could we take that one home and offer another one? You could you say, OK, we'll take this home, offer this one instead. But as soon as that lamb is on the altar, you know what the scripture said? Whatever touches the altar is holy.

Once that all once that lamb's on the altar, you can't take it back. You can't do anything else with it. It is committed.

Whatever touches the altar is holy. The law says. And therefore, when you have presented yourself to God, you're on the altar.

You're holy. You did it. Can't blame anyone else.

But now you have to realize every day that's what you are. Now, does that mean it's impossible to default on that? No, it's not impossible. It's just sacrilegious.

It's just it's just robbing God. If you presented yourself to God, God, here's my members. They're all yours.

And then tomorrow you say, well, I actually kind of wanted to do something that I think maybe you don't want me to do. Well, you might want to, but you don't do it. And if you

did, that was not OK, because you're consecrated.

You belong to God. The members of your body are to be used for him. Paul said in First Corinthians six, 19 through 20.

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? That's a holy building used for only one thing, for the worship of God and the service of God, whom you have from God. And you are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's, your body and your spirit are God's.

You have been bought with a price. You don't belong to you anymore. It always amazes me when people say, well, I'm out of this marriage because I want to be happy or I'm going to do this thing because I want to be happy.

And I want to break this promise or this to do this thing. That's not exactly because I just need a little time for myself. Well, wait a minute.

Wait, wait. You're acting like you own you. Ever heard someone say, it's my life, isn't it? Well, wait a minute.

How did it get to be yours? Did you make it? How do you how does something come? This computer is mine. I bought it with money, money that was in my possession, mine to spend. I bought it.

That's what I want. It's my computer. These are the you that is not.

It's really God's, but you can't take it. It's not yours. It's mine because I got it legally.

But how did I get me? I didn't buy me. I didn't create me. I don't own me in any sense.

Whatever gave you the impression that you belong to you. How can you justify such a concept? It's absolutely impossible to justify. It's just an arrogant default opinion that we have before we know the truth.

And we act on it. And do everything wrong. And everything we do when we're acting on the assumption that I belong to me is an act of rebellion against God, keeping the wrath upon us for the day of judgment.

Well, no, you don't belong to yourself. You've been bought. The price of the blood of Jesus, you were bought with.

Do you want to be owned? If not, then you don't need to be bought. Do you want to be bought? Do you want the blood of Jesus to have some effect on on your destiny? I'll bet you do. I certainly do.

Well, the only way it can have effect on your destiny is if it's the price God paid to get



you. And you belong to him. Therefore, your body is to be yielded to him.

You offer your body as a living sacrifice to him. There's also the sacrifice not only of our physical bodies, but our possessions. I said this computer is mine, but I don't really believe that.

It's just if you want to take the computer without my permission, you'd be in the wrong because. Technically, in terms of horizontal relationships, it belongs to me, but nothing belongs to me. Jesus said, unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple.

And that means when you become a disciple. You sign it all over to God. It all belongs to him.

It doesn't mean you liquidate it necessarily unless he wants you to. If he does, then you do. If he says, give this to that person, you give it.

And you don't feel like you're any poorer for it because you didn't own it in the first place. Paul said when he was in prison in Rome and the Philippians sent him a gift to help with his support. He said to them, indeed, in Philippians 4:18, I have all and I abound.

I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things that you sent. The thing sent from you, he says, those were a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice. Well, pleasing to God.

When you give to God, that's a sacrifice offered to God. Just like when you present your body. Well, of course, if your body belongs to God, then your possessions belong to God, too.

You present those to God. And that doesn't mean you can't spend anything on your needs. Of course you can.

God wants you to have what you need. But it means that you are stewarding his money. You're stewarding everything you have.

Everything you have is his. This is the only gospel in the Bible. There's no other gospel than the gospel of the kingdom of God.

It's not a gospel. Some people are happy to hear about, though I'm not sure why not. To me, it's the most liberating thing in the world.

I don't have to worry about my stuff. I don't have to worry about my life. I don't have to worry about my health.

I don't have to worry about my safety. I don't have to worry about anything because I don't own anything. And if God wants some of it, just tell me where you want it to go.

God, just tell me where it goes. That's where it's going to go. Because I don't want to hang on to it.

There's no peace in hanging on to my stuff. Especially if God's in a tug of war with me over it. Never any peace in that.

So Paul said that when these people sent support to him in prison, that was an acceptable sacrifice while pleasing to God. Well, a priesthood has to offer up sacrifices. Our bodies, our possessions.

Remember David? You remember this probably when the plague was stopped at the threshing floor of Iran. He wanted to offer a sacrifice to God there. And Iran said, I'll just give you the property just here.

You can have it. David said, no, but I will surely buy it from you for a price. Nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.

So David bought the threshing floor with 50 shekels of silver. Now, in other words, David said, when I offer something to God, I'd like for that to cost me something. Otherwise, if it's painless, it's worthless.

If it doesn't, if it doesn't involve any sacrifice, then how is it a sacrifice? And then finally, there's the sacrifice of Thanksgiving and praise. And we can add to this prayer. I'm going to have to mainly just give you the scriptures.

Hebrews 13, 15 through 16. Therefore, by him, let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God. That is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

But do not forget to do good and to share. For with such sacrifices, God is well pleased. What do you have that you could give to God that he needs? Anything of yours he needs, he can just take it.

And besides anything you have, he gave it to you in the first place. What do you give as a gift to the person who has everything? Well, there's one thing God can't take from you without your approval. And that's your praises and your thanksgiving.

He can wish you'd thank him. He can wish you'd praise him. But he can't make you do it.

I mean, he could put you in thumb screws and say, this is going to hurt until you praise me. But that wouldn't be any good. What kind of praise is that? Forced praise? That's not sincere.

What you can give God that's of value to him, that he can't get any other way than you giving it to him. Is for you to say, thank you, God. I praise you, God.

You are a good God. And especially if you do that at times when it's hard to do that.

Because it's still true, even at those times, you see.

To praise God when things are going well, that's fine. You should, of course you should. When Jesus healed ten lepers, one came back and thanked him.

Jesus didn't say, oh, I'm so glad you came back. That warms my heart. He said, where's the other nine? Weren't there ten of you? Where's the other guys? Why didn't they come back and do that? Well, of course, there's nothing particularly commendable about thanking God when he's done something that you should thank him for, that you should have gratitude for.

That doesn't cost you anything. But it's just as true that you should thank God, that you should praise God. All the attributes of God that you praise him for are true whether you're having a good time or not.

Remember the saying, I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet? I'll tell you what, nothing has ever gone too badly for me. I've had some trials, but I've never woken up blind yet. I've never woken up and had to have someone change my diaper many years ago, but not in my adult life.

I've never had, you know, I've never woken up racked with pain. Now, some people are. Some people here have had some of those things happen, maybe, or things comparable, but I haven't.

And no matter how bad things get for me, there's a ton of things I can be mighty thankful for. And if I don't thank God for it, I'm like those nine that you said, where are they? Why aren't they thanking me? But you see, when things aren't going our way, we don't feel like thanking him. We don't feel like praising.

We even sometimes accuse him. Is God really all that good? Yeah, like he has to answer to us about things, his behavior. Sorry, sir.

You know, am I not pleasing you well enough? God doesn't come to you on bended knees. I hope I hope everything's to your liking. He's the king.

You say, God, you are a good king. In some of my trials, I've just I remember just walking through, I was saying, God, it is every moment is painful, but it's such a pleasure being your servant. It's such a privilege to me to be your servant.

You are such a good God. You're such a good king because it was true. I wasn't trying to convince myself.

I know it's true, even when I don't feel like it is. When you offer praise and thanksgiving to God, that's offering a sacrifice, the fruit of your lips. And it matters to him.

It's pleasing to God. Psalm 141, verse two, David said, May my prayer be set before you

like incense. May the lifting up my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

Revelation five, eight, a vision of something going on in heaven, says now when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints in heaven. Incense is offered before God. Obviously, the imagery is something that's pleasant to God.

And what is it? It's the prayers of the saints. It's our petitions, our submission. Prayer isn't only when we ask for things, but it's when we offer up our praise, our thanksgiving, our prayers to him, our submission, our humility before him and coming before him and acknowledging our need.

These things he can't he can't wring those out of us. He can't take those from us when we offer those. We're offering that which is there's you know, it's a limited resource.

And God can't make any more of it. He can make myriads of angels to praise him. He can program them to do it.

He can make many universes that proclaim the glory of God and show forth his handiwork. But he can't get free beings to praise him against their will. I don't think he can.

And I think that's one reason it's such a valuable thing to him. We are separated to God, holy to God, to teach the nations to be a priesthood to the nations, to let them know there is a king and what his demands are and to make our prayers to him, our praises to offer our bodies and our resources to him for his kingdom. That's what's about the kingdom of God is got to be everything or else you're not in it.

You seek first the kingdom of God and then everything will be added to you. And that is true. Even if you're a little skeptical of it, it is true.

And, you know, that's when you start believing that with all your heart and living like it, your life will have a purpose to it that is superior to the purpose, any other purpose in life. And an awful lot of people, I think, are depressed and bored because they don't know what their purpose is in life. Well, it's always at least this.

You can always offer up the fruit of your lips of prayer and praise to God. You can offer your service to God, your members as instruments. You can offer your resources to God, your money and your possessions.

This is part of the sacrificial system. These are the spiritual sacrifices that we as a holy priesthood offer up.