

The Circuit Rider

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The Priesthood of the Believer

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Peter 2:9)

Our present age is an age of spiritual rebellion, unfortunately even within the ranks of Christendom. Secular humanism has not only made its mark upon society, but even upon many churches which have become liberal and modernistic in theology. As a result of his Adamic nature, man has rebelled against the authority of the infallible inerrant Word of God. Today, we are seeing a growing number of people within the visible church practicing spiritual rebellion under their misinterpreted belief in the doctrine that we call the priesthood of the believer.

If we want to live a life pleasing to God, then it's not enough just to be a born again believer, but we need to be a submitted biblical believer. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding over this doctrine under study. In all the New Testament there is only one passage that directly mentions the believer's "priesthood" in which the word is only used two times (I Pet. 2:5,9). However, other verses indicate our privilege and responsibility as "priest" unto God. To begin with, what is the function of a "priest?" A priest is a servant who mediates between God and man. In the Old Testament the priest represented Israel before God, but when Christ died and the veil was torn, then no longer did mankind have to come to God through this type of priestly system.

What the Bible does Not say about the Priesthood of the Believer

First of all, let me say that the Bible does NOT teach that New Testament believers are denied direct access to God. When it comes to spiritual service and prayer, all believers can stand on level ground at the foot of the cross. God has not ordained a

religious system that permits some to serve and pray within the church while others are to remain prayerfully silent and useless. Because of the finished work of Christ, all believers have been given spiritual gifts and direct access to God through intercessory prayer. No Christian has to get another person to do his praying or serving for him. A sinner is saved for spiritual service and regular communion with God. Regardless of location, Christians can come before God in prayer and pour their hearts out unto Him. There's nothing wrong with Christians praying for one another, but we should never leave our praying up to someone else. God wants to hear from every believer on a regular basis and expects spiritual service from every redeemed soul.

The Bible does NOT teach that every believer has the right to be his own authority. God has established the order for His church, which includes the offices of pastor and deacon (I Tim. 3:1-13). However, Christ alone is the "head" (Col. 1:18) of His body. It would do the church good to rid itself of a clergy-laity mentality. However, to disrespect God's authority in His church under the guise of priesthood is no more than following a satanic lie in spiritual rebellion. The purpose of the pastor is to serve as God's divinely called spokesman in teaching the inspired Word to the body of Christ. In so doing, believers can discover their spiritual gifts of service and exercise them through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as "members of the body" (I Cor. 12). Not only does the Book of Hebrews teach about the Priesthood of Christ, but it also gives instructions to believers regarding the respect due those who minister to their souls (Heb. 13:7,17,24). Out of love for God and His Word, a believer should want to respect biblical authority as a result of exercising his priesthood. The ministry of a pastor or any other ministerial position in no way whatsoever destroys the priesthood of the believer.

The Bible does NOT teach that believers have the right to twist the Scriptures any way they choose. There is a right way and wrong way to do anything, including the handling of God's Word (II Tim. 2:15). Without a proper understanding of divine truth and the leading of the Holy Spirit, one can make the Bible say anything that suits his fancy. Every believer has a right to his opinion and to interpret the Scriptures as he feels led of the Holy Spirit, but no believer has a right to reject the absolutes of Holy Scripture. A Christian is free to study God's Word, but he is never free to violate the principles of "sound doctrine" (II Tim. 4:3). There are boundaries around divine truth that no one has the right to alter, change, and disregard. No man's opinion is supreme over the Word of God. In fact, Scripture warns against those who teach "strange doctrine" (Heb. 13:9) and how doctrinal error will increase during these "last days" (II Tim. 3:1). Apart from a clear understanding of Scripture, man can believe the most bizarre things imaginable. There may be doctrinal distinctives and differences among us, but there must be no compromise on the cardinal doctrines of Scripture.

What the Doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers Means

This doctrine means that all believers have equal opportunity to serve the Lord of Glory and come before God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The child of God needs no other mediator to approach his Heavenly Father, other than Christ. We don't have to reach a special spiritual status before we are eligible to pray. However, God does

require every believer to approach Him with a pure heart (Ps. 66:18). No man upon earth can legitimately perform priestly functions for another person. The finished work of Christ on Calvary made it possible for us to be saved and approach God because Jesus is alive today and interceding on our behalf (I Tim. 2:5-6). Jesus Christ made it possible for man to attain the very thing that he could not achieve and that is fellowship with God.

What the Scriptures Teach pertaining to the Priesthood of Believers

The Bible teaches that all believers are to approach the throne of grace in confidence (Heb. 4:14-16). This passage presents Christ as our “great high priest” at the right hand of God the Father. We can exercise our responsibilities as priests, because of what Jesus did on the cross and because of where He is today. One of the things that we are to do as New Testament priests is to serve our Lord and come before Him in prayer. The only mediator through whom believers must go is Jesus Christ. Besides, this divine mediator is more sympathetic with us than any human personality could ever be because He “was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.” Every kind of temptation that we face, He faced; therefore, He knows what we’re going through in this life. The big difference is that Christ had no sin nature with which to respond to evil. Since we have a “great high priest” Who understands our hearts, we need to “come boldly (with confidence)” unto His “throne” and find “grace to help in time of need.” God’s “throne” is a place where believers should look forward to approaching with gladness, simply because it’s a place of “mercy” and “help.” Man cannot approach God’s “throne” of his own merit; it is only possible by God’s “grace.”

Scripture teaches that believers are to draw near to God in full assurance of acceptance (Heb. 10:19-22). Only the application of Jesus’ blood to our sinful souls can give entrance into His presence. Until a person has found forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ, there can be no access to God in prayer. Being purified by Him gives access to Him. Because of the shed blood of Calvary’s Lamb, there is a “new and living way” to approach the throne of God. In the Old Testament, only the Levitical priest and not the people could enter the temple. Today, the “veil” has been torn asunder by the death of Christ (Matt. 27:50-51). Having exercised “faith” unto salvation, we need to learn how to exercise “faith” in daily living and prayer. God doesn’t always answer our prayers the way we want them answered, because sometimes we “ask amiss” (Jam. 4:2-3). Believers must learn to pray as Jesus prayed, “thy will be done” (Matt. 26:42).

The Bible teaches that believers are to offer spiritual sacrifices in praise (I Pet. 2:5,9). The only New Testament passage of Scripture that directly mentions the “priesthood” of believers calls it a “holy priesthood” and a “royal priesthood.” In this scriptural setting, God compares believers to parts of a building. The Lord is building a spiritual house and believers are the “stones” that He is using to construct the “house” for the purpose of having a “holy priesthood.” Every believer is part of this “priesthood” and is responsible for offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. We’re not to offer up animal sacrifices, as did the Old Testament priest, but “spiritual sacrifices” (Rom. 12:1-

2). These spiritual sacrifices also consist of service and “praise to God” (Heb. 13:15-16). Not only are we a “holy priesthood”, but a “royal priesthood” that shall reign with Jesus Christ in His kingdom forevermore (Rev. 1:5-6, 5:10).

Closing

Since God has made every believer a priest, we need to serve Him in gratitude and work at improving our prayer lives. In the same way that the Old Testament priest carried out his duties regularly, we need to serve our Lord and be consistent in prayer (I Thess. 5:17). One of the greatest failures in the life of the average Christian is to pray, as we ought. If we believe in the priesthood of the believer, then we should practice it. Every believer should spend time with God daily in prayer. Remember that talking with God is more than a one way conversation, we should be listening for Him to speak to us through His Word. Unless we approach God in submission and subjection, the time we spend in prayer will be of little value.

A MINISTRY UPDATE



A slight change is coming! With the next edition of our quarterly publication in January, will come a name change. It will be changed from “*The Circuit Rider*”, to “*The Traveling Pulpit*”. I feel like the name is more in keeping with our publication. Nothing will change except the name. I’ll continue doing a short concise Bible Study in each edition.

Covenant of Grace Ministries is now entering our fifth year of ministry and our third year of radio broadcast. God has been so gracious in providing the means of operating this little ministry. Thanks to each and every one of you who pray for us and financially support this work.

My two books, “*Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*” as well as “*My Life as a Pastor*”, are available upon request. Also, the booklet written by my dear friend, Jerry Stanley, that I’ve printed in his memory, “*The Heart of a Hurting Pastor*”, is available. Keep looking up and stay in the Word.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM

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