***The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-448***

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This morning, we direct your attention to Colossians 2:18-19, "The Era of Angelic Worship," number 5.

In Colossians 2:18, the apostle Paul begins that verse by warning us not to let anybody rob us of our prize as church-age believers. Many Christians don't have the foggiest notion of what their privileges, honors, and prize are (what their treasure is), as having been privileged to be born in the age of grace, and in this particular time in history. The apostle Paul said, "Be careful that you don't let yourself be tripped up by the legalists; by the Mosaic Law crowd; or, by those who do not rightly divide the Word of Truth – by that which belongs to Israel, and that which is infinitely superior, that belongs to us in the church.

So, Paul says, "Let no one (it is a command) keep defrauding you of your prize." And he commands the Christians not to let false teachers dissuade them from their grace way of life. The prize, which the Christian has, which may be undermined, are all the spiritual blessings that are inherent in the church age – that which comes to us because we are in Christ: personal holiness now; and, eternal rewards in heaven. What is at stake in the Christian enjoying his privileges as a member of the church age royal family of God? What is at stake is your victory – to be able to live above all the petty things that could preoccupy you in your life, and to live above all of the self-pity that could captivate you, and dissuade you from what? From enjoying the fact that you are a member of the royal family of God. All the riches of heaven are at your disposal, and you are able, each day, to enrich yourself in your eternity. Many Christians do not like to hear that kind of talk.

I had a woman snap at me when I pointed out that our lives now will be evaluated for reward someday in heaven. And what we do now will be judged there, and we will receive that. She said, "Yes, but that's only for the millennium. It's not forever." And I thought, "Now that's odd. You won't find any Scripture that says that." What ticked her off? What ticked her off was the realization, because she is so far out in left field, away from the realities of suffering treasures in heaven that she wanted at least to feel better about it – all that she would be short would be 1,000 years. And then everybody would be back to scratch.

Well, if that makes you feel good, go ahead and believe that. But that's not the way the Word of God says. It happens. These things that we do, Scripture says, "Our Father will never forget." And that . . . goes on for eternity – the treasures that He will give us. Do you want to hazard all that? Paul says, "Do you want to listen to these legalists? Is that what you really want to do, and rob yourself of everything that is yours in the church?"

The danger to grace-age privileges comes from trying to live under the powerless Mosaic Law system of life, which is based on human effort instead of the Holy Spirit power system, where God does the achieving for us and through us – the elements of the prize which are in danger of being neutralized.

**Our Prize**

We have looked at four of them. Here is your prize. Here is your treasure. Paul says, "Protect it. Don't let anybody ever dissuade you from it. Don't let religious society, which doesn't know what you're talking about, dissuade you from this. Don't let some smooth-mouthed preacher dissuade you from this. Don't let your family discourage you, who think they know better.

1. **Positional Truth**

First of all, that prize includes the reality of positional truth. You are in Christ. Therefore, you are eternally secure in your salvation, because once you're put into Him, He has imputed to you His own righteousness, and you're home free. If you do not live right, and if you do not obey Him, you will be disciplined, but you will go to heaven.

1. **Union in Christ**

Secondly, there is the union of all church-age believers in Christ – a spiritual relationship based upon the love of God, uniting all of us as one family in Christ, and the Bible calls us "the royal family of God."

1. **Indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ**

Third, that treasure included that every Christian indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ – Christ living in the Christian (in our bodies) for fellowship as we serve God. Now, that's pretty nice – to have the person of the Lord Jesus Christ assisting you by comforting and companionship. That's what He's there for – the companionship of living.

1. **The Permanent Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

Then the fourth thing that we've seen as our treasure, is that every Christian is indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit, to empower the believer in godly living, and in producing divine good works for service. This is why, though the Mosaic Law spelled it all out: the way we should be – the way it ought to be; there was no way you could be, because you were dependent upon your self-effort and your self-determination, and there was no way to live a godly life with any kind of consistency. Now, God the Holy Spirit will make you a magnificent person. If you just stay in fellowship, He will guide you; He will give you intuitive thoughts; He will direct you; He will bring things together; and, you will have a life as a church-age believer. That's all your privilege – to be led like that. Do you want to go back to the Old Testament system, and its ways? I don't think so.

1. **The Universal Priesthood of All Believers**

Here's another one (number five). This is an oldie but a goodie – the universal priesthood of all believers. We have this taught us in 1 Peter 2:9. He says, "But you (you Christians) are a chosen race – a royal priesthood."

Now, there was a priesthood under the Mosaic Law, in the Old Testament life of Judaism. This priesthood was restricted, however, to only one of the 12 tribes – the tribe of Levi. And the Jews could not approach God directly. You approached God only through the specialized priesthood of the political order descended from the line of Aaron. The line of Aaron provided the high priests. The Levitical family provided various other categories of service. When you were born into the tribe of Levi, you knew that your whole life was going to be in temple service of some kind or another.

It is interesting that, when we get to the millennium, a new temple is built. Jesus Christ is now ruling over all nations of the world from Jerusalem. A new temple will be built in Jerusalem on the sight of the old temple. And the Old Testament priesthood routines will be re-instituted. But these will now be as a memorial, just like the Lord's Supper that we'll observe tonight looks back as a memorial. So, the Old Testament system will look back as a memorial.

However, today, there is no specialized group of priests. There is no such thing as clergy and laity. My job is one thing. Your job is something else. But I have no more power with God, or standing, than do you. We are both simply priests of God. Today, because that's true, every Christian is his own priest before God. This was never true before this church age. That was unthinkable. That means that you can walk into the presence of God yourself. You're an individual representative of yourself, and of yourself only. God has made all Christians part of this royal priesthood of God.

**A Holy Priesthood**

In 1 Peter 2:5, Paul says, "You also, as living stones, are being built up: a spiritual house for a holy priesthood." And why do we have a priesthood? Well, a priest often sacrifices, right? So, Paul says, "To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." You do not now offer animal sacrifices, but there are some very specific spiritual sacrifices enunciated in Scripture, that God says, "As my priest, I want you to perform these." Do you know what they are? If they slip away from you, you're not going to do too good of a job in your priesthood before God.

1. **The Privacy of the Priesthood**

The Christian represents himself. Therefore, we say that the priesthood is private. There's a privacy of the priesthood. We do not have a little compartment box here for a confessional, so that I can sit on one side, and you can sit on the other side, and tell me all your terrible sins. That's the Roman Catholic system. And you are in big, big trouble if you do not periodically go to the priest, and tell him all the terrible things that you have done, so that he can absolve you of them. Under that system, you can go to God and say, "Father, I confess that that was wrong. My heart is broken, and I repent. And I change my way.

Under the Roman Catholic system, the first thing the priest does, when you enter that box, is that he reaches up there, and he slides that little door open. He can't see who is on the other side, and you can't see him. But the first thing he will ask is: "When was your last confession?" That way, he knows how much to expect from you. Some of you people pile up stuff pretty fast. And if you haven't been to a confessional for a year, he knows that he's in for a long stint, by the time you get it all laid out.

Is that biblical? That's madness. Instead, what does the Bible tell us? Every Christian can approach God at any time directly, because he is a priest before God. Hebrews 10:19-20: "Since, therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place (that is, the holy of holies) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He inaugurated for us, through the veil that is his flesh (the flesh of Jesus Christ)." Because of the death of Jesus Christ, His body acted as the flesh between us and God. But once that body died on the cross, and Christ died physically and spiritually, bearing our sins, that veil, which separated us from God, was dramatically removed. And we can now walk right into the very presence of a holy God in heaven.

Matthew 27:50 describes what happened in that event when Christ died first: "Jesus cried out again. This was the seventh time that He has spoken on the cross, and He pushed Himself up on that pedestal where His feet rested, to get a full lung-full of breath, so that He could speak with a loud voice. And He yielded up His spirit. And He cried out, "It is finished." And in verse 51, as soon as He did that, He died: "And, behold, the veil of the temple, that separated the holy place from the holy of holies (the holy of Holies in which only the high priest could go, and he could go in there only once a year), was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split."

So, the whole thing was suddenly torn open. Why? Because the body of Christ had died, and symbolically, the curtain separating man from God had been torn. In that moment, salvation had become a reality. God had been satisfied. Propitiation had been achieved for our sins. The result is that Christ is the vessel through Whom we go into the very presence of God. You can do that now as a priest of God. And the high priest, of course, in the church is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is pointed out to us in Hebrews 3:1: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession."

1. **Access to God**

Then, in Hebrews 10:21-22: "Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near, with a sincere heart, and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our body bodies washed with the pure water (that is, the pure water of doctrine)." We can approach God directly, because we are cleansed, and we are his priests. We bear the righteousness of Christ just as the Lord Jesus Christ has access to the Father, so, too, do we.

**How Do We Approach God?**

How do we do that? How do we approach Him? We approach our Heavenly Father as His priest in several ways. Here are 5 of them.

1. **Church-Age Doctrine**

First of all, we listen to the teaching of church-ag doctrine. We come to church to receive spiritual food. No you go ahead and kid yourself all you want – that you are down to the bookstore, and buy religious books, and read them, and still be fed spiritually. You can learn a lot about the Word of God. And it will enhance your spiritual life. But there's a difference between getting it there, and getting it here, in a room, where you are with the rest of the family of God. The family of God is the core of everything. The family on earth – what is the core? What is the destruction of American society today? It's the family. Once they told women that they cannot stay home, and take care of their children, but they must be out there in the business world (and they must be out there with a job) who is taking care of the family of God? And once husbands are busy with their own lives, and don't have time to fool around with being bothered with associating with their children, what has happened to the family?

This is the work of Satan – to keep us so tied up that we don't have time for our human family. And all over America, you have children growing up to be barbarians. All over America, 50% of marriages end in divorce, because nobody wants to play his own role. Wives have a role to play. Children have a role to play, and fathers (most supremely) have a role to play. If you get out of the bracket of the divine order, the family goes down. Then what happens to the nation then? There is no hope. Whatever good things you may say about the United States, it is moving toward the antichrist's world. Without the building block of the family, there's nothing.

So it is in spiritual things – when you learn spiritual things in the association, or the presence of these believers, the good angels are sitting in these empty chairs. And the fact that Christ is present here with us – that's entirely different. You will walk out of here with a spiritual strength and capacity that you'll never be able to get from reading a religious book from the bookstore.

So, the first way we come into the presence of God is through the local church's expository preaching service.

1. **Prayer**

The second is through prayer – private; and, group. Yes, we pray at home, but the New Testament Christians all gathered together periodically. And that's why we have Wednesday night prayer meeting – virtually, a lost practice among churches today.

I was in a computer class recently, and the lady who was an instructor knew something about biblical things (I could tell). And she was showing us how you program things to schedule things. Then she said, "Now, here it is, 7:30 Wednesday night, and prayer meeting is scheduled (in your church schedule). You'll put 'Prayer Meeting' up here. And then we'll put what the Bible study for prayer meeting." And she listed that, and a couple of other things. But she list one thing that was important. She never said the word, "Prayer."

Well, being of great personal self-restraint, I didn't say anything. But I want to raise my hand, and say, "Shouldn't we pray a little bit at prayer meeting?" She was telling you exactly what happens: "We have prayer meetings all over town, and when you get there, 'You and you,' please stand up and lead us in prayer, and then the preacher gets up and he gives a Bible study." Bible study is great, but that's not the place for it. "Prayer meeting is: Let the people pray." That's how you come into the presence of God.

So, you people who walk into prayer meeting, so that you're there with the other believers – the unity of that prayer: sitting in that little group, looking across at these men; these women; and, these kids, eyeball-to-eyeball – we're on a team. We rise together, and we fall together, as a local assembly.

Prayer is approaching God. How does Scripture put it? It is coming into the presence of His throne of grace. You are invited to come to the throne of grace.

1. **Financial Giving**

Then there is a third way that we approach God as His priest, and that is through our financial giving. We give by grace through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is our privilege to make the local church function; to meet its needs; to keep it operating; and, to make a procedure for the things to be done that need to be done to reach out with the full counsel of the Word of God. And that, as you all know, is what we do here. We do not just tell you what the gospel is every service, but we have the full counsel of the Word of God.

I attended a seminar this week. It was on tax matters: liabilities of church organizations; and, Christian schools. It was the sort of thing that I wanted to gather the materials on – the legal documentation from a superb organization. And the church was out in the Lewisville area. And when I walked in it, I said, "Now, I like this church," right off the bat. It had kind of a Grecian, half-moon, seating arrangement, with the pews, and the platform, and just the looks of the place – the surrounding. Then it had a balcony. And the steps for the balcony came down right in front. And it came right down to the first pew. So, if you came down, everybody would see you, and you would end up right there (bingo!) at the platform. And I thought, "That's odd." Usually, they put the steps at the back. They don't want people disturbing – coming up and down.

Then I realized that the background of this church is associated with a certain Baptist group who specializes in evangelism. In fact, its founder of the background of this particular group, once attacked Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who wrote a book called **True Evangelism**. Chafer had been an evangelist for 14 years, and he knew all the gimmicks and all the tricks that are pulled to get people to make public views. He said that the way you save people is that you present the gospel to them, and then you tell them what to do with it (to believe it). And then you wait upon the Holy Spirit to bring conviction, and to make it clear to them, as He will (in John 16), of righteousness and judgment. And then they know what's at stake, and they'll make their choice. But it is not the gimmickry. It is the Spirit of God. You are saved by means of the Holy Spirit.

This man, who is the head of this particular group, was so outraged, because he was an evangelist, and he was right up there with all the big boys of that era, and they were all gimmickry-oriented. So, he went to Zondervan, and he said, "I'd like to buy the plates for **True Evangelism** by Lewis Sperry Chafer. And I want to buy the whole rights to it." He wanted to destroy the plates?" And when Dr. Chafer told us about that, he sat there in the class, and he chuckled. He said, "The book wasn't much of a financial success. But after he did, boy, did we ever sell books?" So, it took off. And people said, "What is in that book that he wants to destroy?" It was just a biblical doctrine of saving by means of the power of God.

Well, this church has that background, and so it hit me. The reason that those steps come down, is because, when they get the invitation, which is all they do, finally, in every service, they want you to come right down to the front, to the altar. And they were designed to focus everything right down there, because they want you to come forward in the meeting.

Well, these pressures, instead of the grace way of life, are nonsense. Our giving is in the privacy of our priesthood. It is nobody's business what we give, but we give it as unto the Lord. But if he tells you to do something, I must advise you that you'd be pretty smart to do it. You'll be financially better off. And if you don't do it, it'll be to your eternal loss, and it will be to your temporal loss. A priest cannot fool around with the High Priest, when he has given His directive orders.

1. **The Lord's Supper**

Then we approach the Lord through the Lord's Supper. That's what we're going to do tonight. Here again, with the body of Christ – the unity of standing before God, and going through this little ritual, and looking at this piece of bread, representing the body: the enormous suffering; and, finally the death that was brought to it. This Lamb of God was sacrificed for our sin. And looking at that juice from the grape, and realizing how much blood was shed, so that, to the point such that, just before he died, He went into shock, and gave up His life, because He had lost so much blood. This represented the final Lamb of God. If you do not accept that Lamb's death, Who is the only Lamb that counted, you will never go to heaven. And has all those Scriptures that we read to you this morning (in connection with the people in the space vehicle) – that determines where they are congregated now, in heaven, or in Hades. It all has been laid out there. And it all begins with what we observe here in the Lord's Supper.

So, it is a great thing to be able to stand up among believers and have a word of testimony of the grace of God. This is the one service that s Christian should never be absent from, if he can avoid it.

1. **Spiritual Gifts**

Finally, how do I approach my Heavenly Father? We approach God through the exercise of my spiritual gifts; my spiritual abilities; and, my Christian service mission. Gradually, you get the feel of what you are able to do in God's service. You get the sense of what your spiritual gifts are. You may not know this too much when you're a kid, but as you grow older, you begin to see: "Yes, I have a knack for this. I have an ability here. Here's where God has blessed me. Here's what God is enabling me to do." And every time you exercise that spiritual gift, you are worshiping your Heavenly Father. And as His priest, you are serving Him is your calling.

**Spiritual Sacrifices**

Now, what are those spiritual sacrifices? It is pretty important to know what those are. Every Christian, as a priest of Christ, has spiritual sacrifices which he is to be aware of, and to be careful to offer. 1 Peter 2:5, again: "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house (you, the church body) for a holy priesthood, to offer a spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Well, basically, these spiritual sacrifices fall into four categories.

1. **Sacrifice Yourself**

Romans 12:1 describes the sacrifice of yourself: the sacrifice of your body; and, the sacrifice of your time; your efforts; and, your capacities: "And I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." My job, as a priest, is to worship my Heavenly Father, and to put at his disposal my physical body; its natural abilities; and, its spiritual capacities. That is how I perform spiritual sacrifices.

What do you think those men were doing out on that hard job of taking that paint off that shop building? What they were doing was performing a spiritual sacrifice. And God is well aware of it, and it has been well-recorded. Now, if you've got your eyes on yourself, are you going to do much spiritual sacrificing? Not really. You're going to be too preoccupied with the indignities of your present state of life. But as Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer at Dallas Seminary used to tell us: "As your age, so shall your strength be." And as people get older, they discover: "Yeah, the capacities lessened on that level, but they are greater on other levels. I am always able to perform the spiritual sacrifices.

In Philippians 2:17, Paul says, "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you." One of the offerings of the Mosaic system was a drink offering bought on the altar. Paul says, "I am a drink offering. My light is being poured out in the sacrifice of my serving You in faith. I have taught you the Word of God. I am getting older every day. My life is being poured out in your behalf." And ultimately, the Roman Emperor Nero took the cup of Paul's life, and turned it upside down completely when he took his head off. And the last drop of the physical capacity of Paul was gone, as it will be for all of us.

So, the first spiritual sacrifice you make is what you do with your physical body. Everybody in this auditorium is somewhere. And everybody, all day long, is doing something in that somewhere. You are not in a vacuum. How much of those physical capacities are you, as God's priest, bringing to Him?

1. **Sacrifice Your Praise**

The second spiritual sacrifice is the sacrifice of your praise. Hebrews 13:15: "Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." You're going to hear some of that sacrifice being performed here tonight. People are going to stand up, and from their lips will come the sacrifice of praise, and of thanksgiving: "Here's how God has worked in my life." Or you can stay home and watch television. Or you can stay home and do whatever. Or you can be here, to have your own expression of praise, and again, you can see how all of these get your eyes off yourself and on the Lord. Or you could be preoccupied with yourself in some other way tonight.

The praise of our lips is a good thing – to stand up and thank God for what He has done for us.

1. **Sacrifice Substance**

Then we sacrifice spiritually in one of the hardest ways, probably, for Christians to do. This sacrifice is in Romans 12:13. It is the sacrifice of our substance – the spiritual sacrifice of our material possessions. Now, that is a tough one: "Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."

When this Lord's Supper tonight, one of the men will stand up, and they will remind you that there is an offering played by the offering box at the front door. Anything you put in that goes to a special fund (which we have recently repeatedly used, by the way), which we have in reserve for the executive committee members and the pastor to use in helping people in financial needs. These are people who need financial assistance, or it can come to us to ask it within our congregation. And Paul says, "You ought to contribute to that." This is a contribution to meeting the needs of the saints.

Sometimes your sacrifice of your substance is because you extend hospitality to some fellow Christian. Now, in the New Testament, for those who went about doing the Lord's work, that was pretty important. They couldn't just find a Motel 6 and check into it, on their way to the ski slopes. This was a tough time to move about. And how nice it is to come, and some Christian says, "You're in the Lord's work. Come over and stay at my house tonight, and get a good night's rest, and you can go on from here.

Galatians 6:6: "And let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches." Take care of your teachers in the Word of God. Those who teach don't do it, if they're honest and worthy, by giving you a bunch of emotional guff and inspiration. They can't stand up and open their mouths without hours of preparation and confirmation from the Word of God, so that what they tell you – you will have a hard time refuting: "Let the one who has taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches.

Verse 10: "So, then, while we have opportunity." Got it? You're not always going to be able to do this, but while you have opportunity: "Let us do good to men, especially to those who are of the household of faith." And here again, your financial means for doing good things are to those who are fellow Christians. Everything that you give enables us to enhance the Berean ministry – just its physical functioning, and its operational functioning, let alone these special outreaches, and these evangelism brochures, that we're being asked for, in other languages, these which are being done even by people at a distance from us, and we help them to do that.

Sometimes we have special things. And we say, "Here it is. We have a big parking lot fund special from now till the month of July. The day after the Fourth of July picnic, we want to see a bunch of men on this floor – a company who comes in and does this floor. That fund is being built up, and another crew that's outside there, busting up that old sidewalk; laying the forms for the new sidewalk; tearing out this whole parking lot; and, putting in a new parking lot." I know what you're thinking. You're worried that we're going to close the church down, and you'll have to stay at home and watch the preachers on television. No, we wouldn't do that to you. We all have to go back to the little auditorium for a couple or three weeks. But those are big things.

However, what you do every Sunday (giving your gifts) go to sub-projects that are important, except that we distribute it around, because it's not just for some big project. This thing that we're doing over here at the shop building – you wouldn't believe how expensive every gallon of paint is going to be now, that Robert Nicholas is going to spray all over that building, now that they have the old stuff off. But it is something that had to be done, and God is providing the funds to do this. How? This is from your gifts. We're not saying, "Here's a special fund. Everybody get a gallon of paint, and we'll write your name under it before we spray that place."

These things are big projects all the time. So, you're giving to the Lord of your substance. And Hebrews 13:16 says, "Do not neglect doing good, and sharing material goods, for with such sacrifices, God is pleased.

1. **Sacrifice Christian Service**

Then there's a fourth way of spiritual sacrifice that you as a priest present to God, and that is your Christian service – the exercise of your spiritual gifts. Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which good works God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Yes, God has giving you spiritual abilities. He has given you one or more of these nine gifts. And He has listed that you will do this during your lifetime with these gifts. And when you get to heaven, they will look at the chart of what should have been, in comparison to what was – what ought to have been your performance, and what was your performance, in terms of your Christian service responsibility. Now, it's not going to look too good if serving the Lord does not bear a high priority in your mind, with the means and the gifts that you have to serve Him.

Notice Titus 2:14, please: "Who gave Himself for us (Christ) that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself, a people for His own possession, zealous for good works." This is not only; "Oh yeah, I'll serve the Lord. Yeah, I'll help out with project. Yeah, I'll be there to give a hand." We are to be zealous for it – elbowing your way out, so that other people don't get up there to be able to perform this good work, and earn the rewards.

Then there is Titus 3:14. That's a good one: "And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds, to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful." When the people of God are out there in Christian service, pressing needs are going to be met. And this is the business we're in for – the meet the needs of people, starting with their salvation, but then to help them grow spiritually, and to help to get them oriented to the fact that they are strangers and pilgrims in this society, and that if they follow the customs of our world, they're not going to come to church. They're going to barely make one service on Sunday, and probably only a couple of days in each month. They are not going to be oriented to their spiritual feeding. They're not going to be oriented to saying, "God, thanks for this money. I'm going to need this much, and this much, and this much. What would You like to have me do with some of this other, that you placed in my trust, as your steward?” They're not going to do that. They're not going to be concerned for taking care of the people who minister to them, or to help with believers who are in need in the congregation. They're not going to be concerned with anything but themselves.

However, these spiritual sacrifices will lead you to praise the Lord God. Your orientation will be on things above. And you'll be so glad that you did that, when you get to heaven.

So, we have: the spiritual sacrifice of myself; a spiritual sacrifice of my praise of God; the spiritual sacrifice of my substance; the spiritual sacrifice of my service.

The Christian priest has complete access to God. As a priest, you may come into his presence to ask. Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore draw there with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." There it is – the throne of grace. You can go there personally. It is important that we go there as a group, as we do on Wednesday nights, and in our other church services: "Let us therefore draw near, as gods priests, to the throne of grace in heaven, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need: "Father, Sam Jones has a physical problem. Please help him. Please heal. Please give him grace to carry it. Father, I have a limitation of energy. Help me to rise to the need of the moment. Father, I'm down with the flu. I can't go to work. Help me to snap back. Father, help me to know how to be related to this person, and that person, and somebody else, and not get trapped into associations which are going to lead me away from You, and to be on my guard that You are my family. And what is out there in the world is not my family."

So, we Christians have access to God in prayer. And what does 1 Thessalonians 5:17 say? "Pray without ceasing." Just keep doing it all day long. I can't imagine how you can go through your life without praying without ceasing. I have to constantly stop and say, "Father, how on earth do You want me to do this? How am I going to meet this need? How am I going to help this person? This person, Father is a real yo-yo." And then the guidance comes, and the wisdom comes: "Father, do you have my guardian angels watching carefully? I'm now going to drive to the mall." That's not a bad prayer. The guardian angel is one of the great gifts, and needs to be on his toes.

Well, these are things you should pray for. One of the great things, when we approach God, we do it, of course, through our being members of the family of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And Romans 8:26, I remind you again, says, "And in the same way, the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) also helps our weaknesses. But we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us, with groanings too deep for words." You may have a family member, and you don't even know how to pray for this person to get straightened out. You go to God the Father, and you say, "Father, I don't even know what to ask to be done." Then you wait, just in silence, and the Spirit of God steps in, and He speaks to the Father in your behalf, and says, "This is what needs to be done for this person. And Father, I ask you, on behalf of this saint, that this be done."

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly on the job, interceding in our behalf, before the throne of grace in heaven. Hebrews 7:23-25: "And the former priests (of the Mosaic Law system, that some people would like to go back to) on the one hand, existed in great numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing." You always had to have new priests. These guys were dying off, and they had to be replaced. They had to keep going to the altar, and they had to keep making the sacrifices: "But He (Christ), on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds this priesthood permanently." There is only one Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one High Priest for us. We don't need another one. This one will never die.

"Hence also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to go, through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." And that is not salvation only. When it uses the word "save," it means "pulling you out of your trouble." Taking you out of your distressed situation, and saving your hide is included in this. That's pretty good stuff – to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly praying in behalf, as we look and move into such foolishness, sometimes, in our lives.

**Church Ordinances (Rituals)**

1. **Water Baptism**

We, as Christian priests, have two rituals (two ordinances) to perform. The first is the ordinance of water baptism. Every priest is authorized to perform this. Matthew 28:19 says to all believers: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

1. **The Lord's Supper**

The second ordinance that you are entitled to perform is the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you – that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread. And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way, He took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'The cup is the New Covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you shall proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'" He did this at the third cup of wine, of the four cups of wine at the Lord's Supper Passover meal. He did this at the third cup, which is called "the cup of redemption." Here was instituted something new for the church age.

So, this is a little review of what it means, personally, to be a priest of God, and have direct access to Him for all these things, and all these spiritual services, and all these magnificent provisions of care and satisfaction in life. Do you want to go back to the Mosaic Law system?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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