***The Functions of the Christian Priesthood - PH93-02
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:14-19***

We continue with our general line of study which has to do with financing the Lord's work. This has led us to the study of the priesthood system, which God has historically provided for mankind, and with the system of sacrifices that are inherent in any priesthood. Christians, as members of the body of Christ, are individually priests of God. They are priests of God after the order of Melchizedek, the priesthood in which Jesus Christ is the High Priest. We have been told in the Word of God that Christians are a royal priesthood because they are related to Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. Because He is royalty, we, as living stones, built upon His priesthood (the living stone) are also royalty. Since every Christian is a priest, it is obvious that he needs no other priest to represent him before God. Thus, every Christian is his own priest, and he represents no one else but himself before the Lord.

Priesthood in the church age is thereby a very private matter between the believer and the Lord. No one else has the right to intrude himself between you and your relationship to the living God. We will qualify that statement by saying that the pastor-teacher, relative to his congregation, and parents relative to their children, have certain special access into the privacy of the priesthood of believers. That is a limited access, and it is for the purpose of guidance and direction in order for them to function most efficiently in their priesthood. So each believer today should respect the privacy of another Christian's priesthood.

However, as we pointed out, privacy does not exclude caring for the needs of other Christians, nor admonishing other believers against sin when that is in order. To admonish or to exhort another believer, when he is on a foolish course of action, is perfectly in line. Certainly the Word of God calls upon us to have that kind of protective care for the body of Christ. Privacy does not exclude that kind of help, but it does exclude passing any judgments on the motivation of other Christians – motivations which obviously we cannot determine. This is probably the major place where we invade the privacy of other believers – when we pass judgment concerning their motivations, as to what they're trying to do; as to what is moving them; and, as to what their purposes are. Those only God can know. So it's an area that we should not enter.

Periodically, Christian groups will pass out checklists. These checklists will be to evaluate your life as a believer relative to some special expression or some special activity. It is not wrong to have checklists such as that passed out to believers, providing nobody sees the answers but the individual believer who marked the checklist. Rightfully, if you find yourself in a group that passes out checklists of that nature, and then asks you to pass them in so that some spiritual leader can evaluate your spiritual progress, that's out of line, and you should immediately tear up your sheet of paper and say, "Get lost," and refuse to turn in any information on yourself as a believer. If they can't get over the habit of doing that, you might have to find yourself someplace else to worship. Checklists are okay. These guidelines are helpful, and they're informative, but nobody should know what you mark down. Nobody should know the judgments with which you evaluate yourself before the Lord except you and you alone.

Therefore, any counseling of another Christian must not intrude into a person's life beyond the area to which he has invited you. Sometimes people will come and they'll ask for advice. They'll say, "What do you think about this?" They'll ask for information. But you have no right to go beyond what they have invited your attention into. You cannot intrude beyond that point. So respect the issue of privacy.

**The Functions of the Christian Priesthood**

Now we're going to, first of all, look at the functions of the priesthood. You are a priest of God. Therefore, there are certain functions which you are to perform. These functions, as we indicated, are not things that you come up with, but they are functions of the priesthood which God has designed for you to do.

1. **Maintain Temporal Fellowship**

The most basic function of the priesthood is to maintain temporal fellowship – your temporal fellowship with God. This was portrayed, of course, by the sin and trespass offerings which were brought by the Jews under the Levitical priesthood for unintentional sinning and for deliberate sinning. This particular function of the priesthood deals with your own carnality, and you deal with your carnality privately before God. Whenever you step out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship by sin, then you, as a priest, have a problem to deal with. No one else can deal with this problem for you. You alone are to deal with the matter of your carnality. You are your own representative.

So you use the technique which has been laid out by God, in the age of grace, in the form of 1 John 1:9, where, as a priest for yourself, you stand before God and you name your sins. You confess it; you admit it; and, you recognize that it was just that – it was a sin. Then you accept what God has said He will do when you have performed that priestly function for yourself. He has said that it is forgiven, and it is forgotten. Anything that you didn't know that you did that was sinful is also covered by your handling of the confession of the known sins.

Understanding how to confess sins biblically is the first doctrine that the Christian priest must know if he is to serve God. This is the first doctrine you must understand. Immediately, you can see that within the experience of Christendom, here Satan has had a tremendous victory. While many people are born again; many people have learned the doctrine of salvation; and, many people have entered His family in new birth, the average Christian never gets beyond that salvation experience because he is not immediately taught the first function of his new priesthood, which is to maintain temporal fellowship. And he does not understand what happens to him when he sins as a believer.

Many times it's very traumatic. Many times it causes a newborn baby in Christ to simply drift off into carnality; to stay there; and, to spend years out in the wilderness wandering, instead of being able to get on the ball; start learning; and, start growing in his Christian life. So it is important that you know this technique. It is a technique that the Bible spells out. If you have never studied our series of studies on the technique of confessing sin biblically, you ought to study them because there's a great deal to say about this subject which we can't go into here. This is your first function as a priest.

Jesus Christ, our High Priest, represents us before God in heaven as our advocate and as our intercessor. He is preserving our eternal fellowship. He is taking care of the issue of keeping us saved forever. But you must take care of the issue of temporal fellowship as your own priest.

Failure to deal with your carnality will make you a sitting duck to become a casualty in the angelic warfare. Enthusiasm and emotion are often substituted for this function of the Christian priesthood. Vast numbers of Christians are engaged in substituting emotion and enthusiasm as the basis of maintaining a day-by-day relationship with the living God, and it will never do it. Sooner or later, you will fizzle out. You do not function in your priesthood on the basis of enthusiasm, zeal, and emotion. That is not what keeps you related properly to God the Holy Spirit so that He can lead you in your life. That, remember, is what temporal fellowship is all about – being able to listen and respond to God the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever heard somebody described as a person who is unteachable? You can't tell this guy anything. What do we mean when we say that? We mean that this person cannot be taught. He is negative. He is unresponsive, and that's the condition spiritually that we are in relative to God the Holy Spirit when temporal fellowship has been broken. That's why I say that this is the first and primary function of the Christian priesthood – to keep yourself within the fellowship and the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God.

Only the status of spirituality (which is what having all known sins confessed means) enables a Christian priest to utilize doctrine; to keep moving in spiritual maturity; and, to be able to function within his own Christian ministry.

1. **Learn and Share Bible Doctrine**

The second function of the Christian priesthood that you must be careful to maintain is learning and sharing Bible doctrine. Sometimes we summarize that with the word "witnessing." You'll remember from our studies that the Levitical priest ate the animal sacrifices, and thus symbolically fed on the doctrine which these sacrifices (and the ritual by which they were sacrificed) represented. The Christian priest is also very definitely to feed on the Word of God for his own spiritual growth. As a matter of fact, there is nothing else he can feed on and grow spiritually.

So 1 Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes (when you start in the Christian life) immediately desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow by it." Just as a baby, at the beginning of his life, grows by proper nourishment, so you continue growing and maintain good health as a Christian by proper nourishment upon the Word of God. This feeding, Matthew 4:4 tells us, is to include all that proceeds from the mouth of God. All of the written revelation that we call the Bible is what we are to feed upon as believers.

The Christian priesthood, therefore, very definitely includes the study of the Word of God. This is part of what you should be doing with some of your time during the week. 2 Timothy 2:15 puts it this way – that famous verse that we know so well: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

What Paul is saying there is that part of the function of the Christian priesthood is to learn doctrine. As the Levitical priest ate part of the sacrifice, and thereby fed symbolically upon the doctrine, so we are told in the Word of God that the Levitical priest was also the communicator of the Word of God. He fed upon it to learn it, but he also learned it to tell it.

Malachi 2:7, therefore, says, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, that they should seek the law at his mouth. For he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Even in the Old Testament, it was recognized that the priest was the communicator of divine viewpoint information. He had access to that part of the Bible which was written up to that point, and he was the communicator of this information. So you, as a Christian priest, must, on the one side, feed upon the Word of God. You must study doctrine and learn it. And on the other side, you are to communicate this information.

Thus getting back here again to 1 Peter 5:2, we read, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre (that is, for money), but of a ready mind." Indeed, this verse is speaking specifically to the elder pastor-teacher in a local church who is commanded, and who is instructed here, that his business is to explain the Bible to the people of God. But this principle equally applies to all believers who are to be communicators in the circle in which they move of the Word of God.

This, again, is applied specifically in terms of those who were exercising the communicator gift. The apostle Paul could, after many years, very happily say that he had done the job of communicating. And then he exhorted other leaders in the work to do the same. So in Acts 20:28, we read, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." If you'll run your eye back up to verse 26, Paul could make a statement like that, exhorting other teachers of the Word to do their job as the priests of God, because he himself had done it.

In Acts 20:26, he says, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day that I am purer from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Now, that should be true of a preacher. It should be true of the people of God. There should not be anybody who is able to say, "You did not inform me. You refused to take the trouble to communicate what you knew to me when I was available to you, and you had opportunity to talk to me. So it is the second primary function of the Christian priesthood that we are to daily take in the Word of God, and we are to daily share the Word of God.

2 Timothy 2:2 puts it this way: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." Christians should teach other Christians who can teach other Christians.

You can see that one of the things that we communicate under this function of the priesthood is the doctrine of the gospel. This is where your personal evangelism comes in. This is where you function as a witness relative to evangelism. Witnessing in the Christian life is not just soul-winning. Witnessing is also soul-developing. It begins with soul-winning, but then it moves on through the normal functioning of the local church to soul-developing, and through your personal help and guidance and information that you have to give to people as that opportunity avails itself to you.

Obviously, this function requires knowing the categories of doctrine. You're not going to go very far in this function of your priesthood if you yourself have not learned the categories of divine viewpoint truth. But if you fail at this point in your priesthood, you'll be completely defeated as a believer priest. You can't do this second function until you've done the first one. You cannot learn and share doctrine as a priest of God until you have established temporal fellowship as a priest of God. That first function is essential to your being able to learn God's viewpoint to begin with.

1. **Prayer**

The third function of the Christian priesthood is the function of prayer. This was portrayed in the Levitical order by the altar of incense which represented the prayers of the saints going up to God. The function of prayer is placed upon us, for example, in Philippians 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Do you have something you want? God says, "Tell me about it. I'm ready to listen. In James 5:16, we have the statement. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much."

In Jude 20, the last part of that verse says, "Praying in the Holy Spirit." From our studies earlier in Philippians, as we examined the Christian's warfare in Ephesians 6, we learned that God's tactic for victory in the angelic conflict is prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 declares to us what we have referred to as the tactic of prayer. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Victory as a Christian is often falsely associated with conforming to certain practices which are considered spiritual rather than to prayer. It is amazing how, among Christians, prayer is neglected within the church body as a corporate activity. Spiritual progress is associated with you doing certain things; with you attending certain things; with you acting in a certain way; with your using certain words and not using other words; with your going to certain places and not to going other places; with your dressing in a certain way; or, with any number of external factors that you can just look around the group and pick up what's accepted and what isn't accepted here. And that is to be equated with spiritual development.

That is always a substitute for the real power of the working of God, and that is prayer. People go through all kinds of externals in order to get God to be nice to them, and to get God to bless them in some way. And Christians are trying always to bribe God in one way or another. So somebody decides that they're going to perform some act of Christian service. Maybe they're going to give some money so that something can be purchased that the local church needs. Maybe the reason they do that is because they're looking for a nice girl to marry. So they say, "Lord, I'm going to give this gift, and I wish you would reward me with a nice girl to marry." Well, you might get a girl to marry, and she might be not so nice, and that would serve you right, because you're trying to bribe God.

You and I, as Christian priests, have direct access into the Holy of Holies to God's throne room by His grace. We can make our need known, and that is powerful ammunition in the angelic warfare – to be able to walk right into headquarters itself and make your requests known, and have them granted.

We have direct access to God. We do not go through anyone else in prayer. Hebrews 10:19-20 read, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Learn the tactic of prayer, and then God will respond. He knows everything you need before you ask Him. But He says, "I won't give you a thing until you ask Me in prayer."

That is a critical feature of the Christian priesthood. We have that summary statement in James 4:2: "You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not." That is the principle. We cannot get around it.

The practice of prayer is something you begin privately. You get some instruction on how to pray. If you don't know how to do it, then get the studies on the technique of prayer. Learn the order of prayer and the setup of prayer, then start practicing it privately. There is nobody here that's too good to spend time in prayer every day, or that doesn't need it. Then you're ready to begin to pray publicly in groups. When you pray publicly in groups, you just start off easy and low key, and you don't make any big deal about it. When you're ready, without any pressure from anybody or even from yourself, you're happy to speak out and lead in prayer. God will lead you in that. He will make what you say a blessing. Remember that you are a priest that's making a contribution to the body that other priests cannot make. If you think you're too shaky praying in public, go ahead and write out your prayers, but don't copy somebody else's prayer.

I heard a lady pray in prayer meeting here at Berean one time. I knew she had a very simple vocabulary, but she did want to pray in public. She thought that she couldn't just talk to the Lord in the way she was and with her words. So she thought she had to dress it all up. So one day she did lead in prayer in a group, except it wasn't she praying. She had gotten one of these books. Immediately I knew that this wasn't her heart which was praying. God knew it, too, incidentally. It went something like this: "Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, thou who giveth us the beneficence by which we sustain ourselves day-by-day, we beseech thee by thy mercies and thy kindnesses, as thou hast from everlasting in the past to everlasting in the future." It just went on, and I'm telling you, some of these Sunday morning preachers would have been proud to pray like that. In fact, that's how they do pray.

Every now and then, I listen to them on the radio on Sunday mornings, just to practice up on my pontifical preacher voice and pious platitudes, so I know how the pros do it. Obviously, that was not pleasing to God. You as a priest are to pray, indeed. But don't try to fake it with God, and don't try to put on fronts with Him because He's not interested in that, and you don't have to do it. You just be yourself. To perform this function of your priesthood, you will have to learn the doctrine (the technique) of prayer. So study that.

1. **Sacrifices**

There is a fourth function of the Christian priesthood, obviously, and that is sacrifices. We're coming down to one of the very critical points, which is where we began in all this – the function of offering sacrifices, portrayed under the Levitical order by the brazen altar with all that took place on it. The church age sacrifices under the Christian's Melchizedek priesthood are spiritual in nature. However, that does not mean that they are not real sacrifices. They are just as real as any of those animals. They're just as concrete as any of those animals that were brought in the Old Testament.

1 Peter 2:5 tells us about our sacrificial system. That verse says, "You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The word "offer up" is the Greek word "anaphero." "Anaphero" is a word that simply means "to bring to the altar" or "to offer up." It is in the aorist tense so it means at any point that you perform the act of sacrifice. It is active which means that you as an individual Christian do it. Your pastor does not do this for you. Your church does not do this for you. Notice the active voice. You must personally perform this sacrifice. It is in the infinitive mood which expresses purpose. That clues us in that bringing an offering is God's purpose for the believer.

What he brings is called a "sacrifice" ("thusia"). "Thusia" is an act of offering to God. This is a special kind of an act of offering. It is called a spiritual act of offering. The Greek word is "pneumatikos." "Pneumatikos" (spiritual) is put in here to indicate that we have non-animal sacrifices. That's what the word means here. It means non-animal sacrifices in the age of grace. But again, I must remind you that these are very definite real concrete sacrifices as we shall see. We are to bring sacrifices, not that we come up with, again. Notice how consistently the Bible says, "I will tell you how to approach Me. I will tell you how to serve Me. I will tell you how you go about acting as a priest. I will tell you how you relate yourself to Me."

These sacrifices, therefore, Peter says, "Must be acceptable to God." "Acceptable" is the Greek word "euprosdektos." This is a triple compound word. The first part "eu" means "well." The second part is the preposition "pros" which means "towards" or "face-to-face." And "dektos" means "regarded favorably" or "acceptable." So if we were going to put these three words together, we'd have "well toward acceptable" or "very favorable acceptance." Very favorable acceptance by whom? To God. Spiritual sacrifices which are very favorably accepted to God. Our English simply says that they are to be acceptable to God. But the Greek says not only acceptable, but they are going to be immensely acceptable to God. It uses a word that conveys that emphatically – "very much acceptable to God." In other words, it is a great disappointment to our Father in heaven when His Christian priests do not make their sacrifices that they are called upon to perform day-by-day. Thus, you should know what the sacrifices are; how to perform them; how to present them; and. how to exercise that part of your Christian priesthood.

One of the first things to learn about very immensely acceptable sacrifices to God, Peter says, is that they are acceptable to Him "By Jesus Christ." The word "by" is "dia" which means "through." These are acceptable through the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because in our Melchizedek priesthood, who is the High Priest we work through? The eternal son of God. He's the High Priest. He's the One we function through entirely.

So the spiritual sacrifices of the Christian priest are not an optional function, but they are essential to the divine plan in the church age. If you and I do not bring these sacrifices, the whole work of God has ground to a halt. Now understand that. If you do not bring these sacrifices, the work of the Lord grinds to a halt. Is it any wonder that Satan wants to keep Christians in the dark to begin with on the fact that they are priests? So he creates the illusion that we have clergy and laity today. God could not loathe anything more than that.

Secondly, when you understand you are a priest, then Satan keeps you confused or ignorant about what the functions of your priesthood are, so that you don't know that the first function is maintaining temporal fellowship. You don't know that the second function is learning and sharing doctrine. You don't know that the third function is prayer. Finally, you don't know the fourth function – the performance of spiritual sacrifices. It is through these that the work of God is actually performed.

**The Sacrifices of the Christian Life**

So we come at this time to the high point of the sacrifices of the Christian life sacrifice.

**Your Physical Body**

We find sacrifice number one in Romans 12:1. We may describe it as the sacrifice of self, or more specifically, of your physical body: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your physical bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Let's get some explanation of the text. The word "present" is the Greek word "paristemi." The word "paristemi" means "to provide." So here the first thing we are told is to provide God with something that we have in the form of a sacrifice. Immediately, you see that this is a very real and a very concrete sacrifice. This is not just some abstract idea. It's just as real as any of those animals in the Old Testament, except the body, this time, is not the carcass of some dumb animal, but it's the carcass (if you want to put it in equivalent terms) of the Christian priest.

This is in the aorist tense. Aorist always means a point of action. So here is the point when you make a spiritual sacrifice of your body, and you will do this many times. Many times you will take your physical body, and you will use up some of your life in behalf of the Lord's work. You will use up some of your physical capacity. You will use up some of the time that God gave you of your allotted 70 years plus 10 (if you're good on health food stuff, and you get an extra strong body to stretch it out). There are many points of time when your physical body is laid on the line for Jesus Christ. It is active. This is something that you do with your own body. It is again infinitive, and infinitive here means purpose. It is God's purpose for us to do this.

"Your bodies," of course, refers to the physical bodies of the Christians. It is to be presented as a living sacrifice. You are to offer your body as a living sacrifice which God is then able to use in making divine viewpoint known to the world. In Philippians 2:17, Paul says, "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

You may remember that when we studied that passage, we pointed out that Paul was saying he was ready to have his physical body sacrificed in behalf of those Philippian Christians. For all he knew, sitting here in this Roman jail, that's exactly what was going to happen to him. In his second imprisonment, that is what happened to him, and the sacrifice of the living body of Paul included taking his life.

"So that we present our bodies." Such a personal offering of one's body is a thing which Romans 12:1 says is wholly and acceptable unto God. That is, it is something that is pleasing to Him. It's acceptable. It pleases Him. It's a fragrant aroma sacrifice. You have learned what that means.

This spiritual sacrifice of your physical body is not unreasonable. The Bible tells us that this is your reasonable service and the word "reasonable" is the Greek word "logikos." "Logikos" means rational. This is your rational or intelligent service, and the word service is the Greek word "latreia." This is a word for religious service. This is your rationale service to God. The most rational thing you could do is to say, "God, here is my physical body. I wake up this day. I have so much capacity of mind; so much physical energy; and, so much emotional capacity, and it is Yours to use. I'm going to go out into the world. I'm going to use it in my livelihood. But even in that, as I go through the day, my body is Yours to use. There are times when I don't work for a livelihood. My body is there for you to use. I use it, and He uses it in a variety of Christian service activities."

God's work cannot be done without the physical bodies of believers. Remember that. There is nothing that can be done in the Lord's work without the physical bodies of believers. It takes hands; it takes feet; it takes brains; it takes eyes; it takes ears; it takes mouths; it takes tongues; it takes energy; it takes everything that we are; and, it takes emotions. It's all that we are as a human being in order to get God's work done. The place that the Lord's work is dragging and not being accomplished, you will always discover, is a place where physical bodies are not being placed on the line in sacrifice; where people are waiting for other people to do it; and, where people refuse to take their time to do it.

When you take your time to act in some area of Christian service, you have used that part of your 70 years. You'll never see them again. You'll never have it to invest again. You'll never have it to use again. But without your having done that, some portion of the work of God could not have been performed. So it does take our physical bodies. Every time you act in an expression of Christian service, you have taken your body and made it a sacrifice which is a fragrant aroma to the Lord.

Of course, to yield your body does not mean to mutilate or to kill yourself. Sometimes in the military service, some commanders in the field like to inspire their men by calling upon them to die for their country. Nobody ever won a war by dying for his country. The only way you win a war is by living and letting somebody else do the dying. On the other side, God is not interested in having you take your body and see how you can abuse it in His service. And when He says, "Put your body on the line as a living sacrifice to Me," He's not asking you to destroy yourself physically or to incapacitate yourself physically. He's asking you to use your body within the limitations of your age and within the limitations of your personal weaknesses physically – of your deformities. You need to get enough rest; to get the nutrition you need; and, to get the change of pace you need to keep the body functioning so that you don't bring a blemished body.

Remember that the Old Testament always forbad bringing a blemished animal to sacrifice. God does not want your blemished, incapacitated body because of your carelessness. He wants you, as He has made you, with full capacities cared for by you. That is your reasonable service.

Of course, it is true that when you do give your body in the Lord's service, He may call upon you for the supreme sacrifice. He did call upon Paul in that respect. In 2 Timothy 4:6, Paul says "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." What was he talking about? What was he going to offer? He was talking about his physical body. He said, "I am now ready to have my life taken." He was describing it in terms of the sacrifice of self – the Christian's sacrifice of his body. Paul said, "I'm ready now to have my body taken in death, because that is what is going to serve the Lord's plan at this point in time. And, indeed, it was.

This offering is the offering of your body, and it may indeed require your life itself. In 1 John 3:16, John says, "By this perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." All that this means is to dedicate your physical capacities to be used as the Lord sees fit: for you to use your body and his service in hardship or in ease; to use it in prosperity or in poverty; or, to use it until death do you part from this life. That's what He's asking you to do – to make your body His instrument because He cannot do the work on this earth in any other way.

The body, which is viewed as God's, of course, must be kept fit for His service. Dead Christians do not produce much divine good. If you don't believe me, go down to the local mortician where he's got those bodies laid out, and just watch and see how much divine good they produce. Most of them just cause a lot of trouble even after they're dead.

Christian service is always an investment of your physical capacities, using up a lot of time of your life. So give God the best of your capacities. Don't wait until you've got all your leftover energies. Save some time in the day when you wake up fresh to serve the Lord, and say, "Here's my body. What needs to be done?" Don't always drag in after your best capacities have been shot out there in recreation or in the world, or in pursuit of your other ambitions. Take your body to Him sometimes when it's at its best.

Take it to Him when it's in the days of your youth. If you've been born again while you were a young person, the grace of God has been very kind to you. I cannot tell you how many times I've heard older people, who came to know the Lord, looking back and regretting the fact that they no longer have the capacities they once had in their youth, and how they wish they could do things for the Lord physically that they're no longer capable of doing, just because of their age; because they squandered their capacities; or, because they were not believers. They look back upon that as wasted lives. Every time you use your physical body in the Lord's work, you have offered a sacrifice. That to him is a fragrant aroma.

One of the loveliest pictures of this kind of a sacrifice in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 8:5, where Paul is describing the Christians from the province of Macedonia – they were given a very large offering to help the poor saints in Jerusalem who were going through a time of famine. Paul not only appreciates the offering they gave, but he recognizes something else that they sacrifice along with the substance. That was: "And this they did not as we hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." First they gave themselves to the Lord. First they delivered their bodies and said, "Lord, here am I," like the prophet of old, "send me." That was the first capacity they have. They gave it to him gladly and willingly and with great rejoicing.

That is sacrifice number one. Our time is gone. So we're going to stop on that one. Perhaps that is enough for you to work on this week. Review the functions of the priesthood, and start exploring how you're doing on that first. How careful are you to perform the function of maintaining temporal fellowship via first John 1:9? How careful are you to daily be learning doctrine and sharing the Word of God? You have plenty of people you come across who have got problems. You are the Lord's witness. The problems they have are spiritual problems. There is always a basic spiritual reason for their problem. You can point them in the right direction.

How careful are you in maintaining the function of prayer? Well, when you're in trouble, yeah. When you're broke, yes. When you have some great crises and need, yes. But how about when things are going great? Everything's coming up roses. That's when you should pray more than ever so that you do not lose your orientation.

Then you make your sacrifices. And the first one to work on is this sacrifice of your body, because the sacrifice of yourself to provide is what that means: to present. That means that it is your reasonable Christian service as a priest of God. If we work on that one, there will be a lot of people available to do a lot of things in the Lord's work everywhere. His work will not be crying for bodies – human beings to perform the work that needs to be done. We won't be standing aside and saying, "God, stick somebody else's body in there. Let someone else do it." Instead you will say, "Lord, how much can I minimize the time I have to spend in working, and maximize the time that my body can be available in Your service? That is a Christian priest who's on his way to super grace life.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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