

Lesson for September 13, 2009

Review of Our Spiritual Assets

Royal Priesthood and Royal Ambassadorship

Royal Priesthood

As members of the Royal Family of God, every believer in this age is appointed as a royal priest. This appointment is a grace function and therefore does not depend on spiritual advance. All believers, male, female, old, young, mature or immature are members of the Royal Priesthood. However, this does not mean that all priests are equal. It means that they have equal privilege to perform the duties of a priest. (I Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:6)

As believer-priests, we represent ourselves before God. We do not need to confess our sins to a member of the clergy; we confess our sins directly to God. This is to be done in private. We do not need someone else to pray for us, though we always appreciate the prayers of others on our behalf. As priests, we are to come boldly before God and offer prayer for ourselves. Unlike the Levitical priesthood in Israel, which was based on physical birth, the priesthood of the believer is based on the “new birth” (salvation). We actually share Christ’s priesthood because we are in union with Him, our High Priest. (Hebrews 3:1; 4:16)

Since we represent ourselves before God, it is our individual responsibility to grow spiritually through the perception and application of Bible doctrine. *Your spiritual life is your unseen relationship with God* and functions as a part of your Royal Priesthood. Until such time as your spiritual life is developed by consistent study and application of Bible doctrine you will be unable to fulfill your responsibility as a priest. (Ephesians 4:12-15; II Peter 3:18)

One aspect of your function as a priest is worship. Often misconstrued as some form of emotionalism, true worship is always based on the filling of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. Worship may be in the form of ritual, such as the Communion service or it may be a non-ritual activity such as singing songs. Whatever the form of worship, it must always be doctrinally correct if it is to honor God. The highest form of worship is the study and application of the Word of God. Other forms of worship can be the offering of prayers of thanksgiving and the giving of money. Worship always involves “giving back” to God that which He has already given to us. For example, you cannot give God thanksgiving if you have not learned to be thankful. Application of Bible doctrine is a form of giving back to God what the study of His Word has given to you. (John 4:24; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:16; I Timothy 4:12-16)

Page 2, Royal Priesthood and royal Ambassadorship

Any activity that draws attention away from God and towards self is a form of arrogance and is not worshipping God. Sincerity is not a substitute for truth. A person may be sincere in their attempt to worship God and be sincerely wrong. True worship must always be done God's way, in order to be honoring to Him. When self, others or overt activities (including singing) are elevated above learning Bible doctrine, worship is distorted into legalism or religion and both are the enemies of Christianity. (Romans 12:1)

The true function of the believer-priest's spiritual life is the development of a relationship with God. This relationship is your unseen, private life with God. You and you alone know what that relationship is like. Your life before others, which we call the Christian Life, can be faked on a regular basis either in ignorance or cognizance. (I Corinthians 2:9-16)

There are many counterfeits to the spiritual life. It is therefore of extreme importance for each of us as believers to learn, understand and execute the *true* spiritual life. Without a correct understanding of the Biblical spiritual life, the believer will go through life executing some form of legalism or asceticism that will lead only to spiritual weakness, misery and unhappiness. The true spiritual life is so much more than just being a good person, performing good deeds or keeping the Ten Commandments. *The true spiritual life is invisible!*

The true spiritual life of the believer is based on having the integrity of God operational in his life. Before God's integrity can be operational, it must be developed. The question we must ask is "How is the integrity of God developed?" As Christians, we should know the source for discovering the answer: The Bible. The answer to spiritual questions can be found only in God's Word. Therefore, the study of His Word will give us the answer to this question regarding the true spiritual life. (Hebrews 4:12)

First, we must understand that there is a difference between our function as priests and our function as ambassadors. As priests, we represent ourselves before God (invisible) but as ambassadors we represent God before others (visible). Before a believer can be an effective representative for God, he must have a maturing relationship with God, which develops Christian integrity.

The integrity of God is never compromised by what man does or does not do. Therefore, developing God's integrity is not accomplished through overt activity, but through thinking truth. You cannot think truth unless truth is resident in your soul as your spiritual frame of reference and your spiritual vocabulary. God is truth and He has always had integrity as a part of His character. God never veers from the truth, and as royal priests in union with Jesus Christ, we are commanded to know the truth and stay loyal to the truth. (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:5-13)

Royal Ambassadorship

Every Christian is an ambassador for Jesus Christ. The Greek word for ambassador is “presbeuo” and means “eldership, aged or rank.” This makes perfect sense for Christians, since you cannot properly represent Jesus Christ on earth if you are not advancing in the Christian Way of Life. (II Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20)

The Royal Ambassadorship of the believer is your *visible* relationship with others and is the result of (not the means of) your spiritual life (your invisible relationship with God). Just like non-Christian ambassadors, there are effective ambassadors and non-effective ambassadors.

As believers, we take our precedence from Jesus Christ. Christ was God’s ambassador on earth. Since Christ has ascended to Heaven, believers are now God’s representatives on earth. With Christ as our standard, the believer controlled by the Holy Spirit strives to become an effective ambassador for God. (Hebrews 1:1-9)

The effective ambassador is a blessing to others. God blesses the believer when he has developed capacity to receive blessing. Capacity is developed by the believer-priest as he builds his relationship with God. God never blesses the believer because of his production as an ambassador. This means that the primary responsibility of the royal ambassador is the application of Bible doctrine. (As a priest, the believer is responsible for the perception of Bible doctrine). Divine production is always the result of a right relationship with God, never the means. Before the believer can be an effective ambassador for Christ, he must have a developing spiritual life. If he gets the “cart before the horse,” his ambassadorship becomes legalism or Christian activism (trying to reform the devil’s world). (Matthew 6:33)

It must be pointed out that the priesthood and the ambassadorship of the believer are to work in harmony in order to bring honor to God. Simply having a spiritual life without application is an untested life and having a Christian life without a spiritual life is a wasted life. If we are going to execute the Christian Way of Life effectively, we must do things God’s way. This does not mean that we will always do things the right way 100% of the time. It does, however, mean that we are utilizing the resources outlined in God’s Word.

Commonly called “Christian service,” true divine production is radically different from what most people think. Divine production is the function of the royal ambassador motivated by his relationship with God. (Romans 12:11)

Page 4, Royal Priesthood and Royal Ambassadorship

All blessings from God are on the basis of grace and therefore have nothing to do with human works. God does not bless you because you're good, because you help others, because you give money, because you witness, because you come to church or any other overt activity. God blesses you because you possess His righteousness. It is your eternal relationship with God that brings you blessing, not your personality or ability. (Ephesians 1:3)

Divine production can be visible or invisible. For example, prayer is invisible divine production when it is offered for others. Sharing the Gospel is visible divine production. Certain categories of divine production are common to all believers and some are fulfilled through the function of our spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8)

As ambassadors for Christ, we have been given the responsibility and the privilege of sharing the good news of the Gospel with others. Often extreme pressure is placed upon believers using false doctrine in order to force them into a certain routine of witnessing. The most common of false doctrines says that a person will go to Hell if you fail to share the Gospel with him. This is not true. God will not let a person go to Hell who wants to know truth, whether or not you speak to that person about salvation. (II Corinthians 5:18-20)

Sharing the Gospel of Christ should be natural and easy without pressure from any source. Your love for God should be all the motivation necessary. God does not want religious nuts running around getting in people's faces and talking about "Jesus." More harm than good has been done, in the name of Christ, by misguided and misinformed Christians. If you want to be an effective witness for Christ (and you should), you need to learn how to share the Gospel effectively.

Being an effective witness for Christ begins with being an effective Christian. Since you are the best Christian that someone knows, it should motivate you to set an example of Christ-like attitudes and Christ-like actions. Failure to do so will limit your effectiveness as a witness for Christ. However, no one ever accepted Christ as Savior by observation. It is therefore our responsibility to verbally share the Gospel when the opportunity presents itself. The Bible says that we are to be ready always to give reason for the hope that is in us. (Romans 14:21; I Corinthians 6:12, 8:13; Galatians 5:13; I Thessalonians 5:22; Titus 3:8)

The Apostle Paul was a great example of a witness for Christ. In I Thessalonians 2 the Scriptures mention the qualities of an effective witness: (1) bold in his witness (2) used no deceit or trickery (3) fulfilled the trust God had placed with him (4) he was honest (5) he didn't seek the praise of men (6) he was gentle (7) he had great love and concern (8) he labored diligently (9) he carried a good testimony (10) he executed the Christian Way of Life before them as a testimony.