



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Peter 2:5-9

"The Local Church: Its Priesthood"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We turn again to thee Lord asking thy blessing upon us as we consider matters that concern the local church; help us Lord to perceive thy mind and thy will with regard to the church and enable us as we ourselves have a part in the ministry of one to be more pleasing to thee in this respect. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] We were looking last time at the ordinances of the church and making the point that there are two rather than seven as the Roman Catholic Church counts them, ordinances of the church; the ordinance of baptism and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. And we made the general point that the ordinance of baptism is designed to represent our entrance into Jesus Christ or the body of Christ. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is designed to symbolize our continuance in the relationship to Christ or our continuance in the body of Christ that's why we are baptized only once. No one in the Bible was ever baptized twice except those that have received John's baptism who were later on baptized in Acts chapter 19 but that was something unique. We have no indication of any believer since the Day of Pentecost being baptized twice, which of course, as some application of the doctrine of eternal security too. But the reason the

baptism is once is because it signifies our once and for all entrance into the body of Christ.

But on the other hand, the Lord's Supper is observed frequently, the Lord Jesus says this be doing in remembrance of me is in the present tense so the implication is the Lord's Supper is something to be done continuously. Now, the Bible doesn't tell us it is to be done weekly or monthly or quarterly or semi-annually or annually. It does, however, suggest that the apostles observed the Lord's Supper every week. We read on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread in Acts chapter 20, verse 7. We know also, from post-New Testament times that Justin Martyr in the *Didache*, and in other references, that the early churches practice was to observe the Lord's Supper as the Lord's days came around. And we have a reflection of this in the fact that in the Roman Catholic Church the Mass is observed every Sunday.

The other night I was calling on a young couple that are coming to Believer's Chapel now, and the man who is the head of the house is a former Roman Catholic, in fact, he is still a member of the Roman Catholic Church very excited about the things of the Lord. His wife is a former Baptist. And she smiled and said you know he's so recently out of the Roman Catholic Church that he stills calls the Sunday evening meeting at Believers Chapel the Mass. [Laughter] But that is a reflection of the fact of the practice of the early church, the fact that in the Roman Catholic Church the Lord's Supper is observed week by week.

We have said that the Lord's Supper is the only act of worship for which our Lord Jesus gave special directions and that we assume from this that this is a very important thing for him there is also an indication in that text that I quoted from Acts 20 that it was the highlight of the meeting of the church. On the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread not to hear a sermon, but to break bread; I don't want to prove too much by these statements but it does seem that this was the highlight of the weekly meeting or the regular meeting I should say of the local church and I do

think that it is fair to say that the piety that omits the observance of the Lord's Supper is not a genuine piety. Because it's very simple thing to do and just like baptism it pleases the Lord, remember the Lord said with reference to the last Passover, "With desire, I desired to eat this Passover with you." So I think we can say that learning from that it is a great pleasure on our Lord's part for his believers to meet around the Lord's table and observe the Supper, reflect upon him, feed upon him, as we deduct in thinking about from the book of Leviticus.

Now, we can talk a great deal about the doctrines of sanctification and don't observe the Lord's Supper, seems to me putting the cart before the horse. That's a very simple thing to do it has a direct effect on our growth and grace and if we don't observe simple things like this how can we expect to observe more esoteric things that have to do with the doctrine of sanctification.

The Biblical Significance of the Supper: In 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 27 through verse 34 we have the Pauline explanation of the significance of the Supper and I don't think we need to do anything more than just to reflect upon what he says there, he speaks about the taking of the bread and he says, "That is his body which is given for them." And he speaks about the wine and he says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." And we are to assume from that then, that the observance of the Lord's Supper and the partaking of the elements and the wine is designed to bring to our attention that which he did for us on the cross at Calvary.

There have been four theories of the significance of our Lord's statements and the ones repeated by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Specifically, what does he mean when he says this is my body? Now, we don't have time to talk about this it really belongs in the subject of history Christian doctrine I guess or a more detailed study of the significance of the Lord's Supper in ecclesiology but in our nine sessions we don't have time to deal with the details of this. You have been told do doubt that the Roman Catholics believe in a doctrine of transubstantiation they believe that the Priest by

speaking certain words is able to transform the bread into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the Priest do not believe that the bread looks like the body of our Lord but that it is the accident, that is the appearances remains the same. But the reality the bread has now been transformed into the body of our Lord, transubstantiation.

The Lutherans have a similar view but Luther distinguished his views from the Roman Catholic Church and the word consubstantiation has generally been associated with the Lutheran view. Luther believed that the body and blood of our Lord were in with and under the elements but were not identified specifically with the elements so consubstantiation from the Latin prefix "con" which means "with" so our Lord was present with and truly present. And this was the occasion with his dispute with Zwingli and some of the other Reformed group.

Calvin had a doctrine of the spiritual presence of our Lord and he believed that when you take of the elements our Lord was spiritually present in the elements, not really present as Luther taught but spiritually present. And Zwingli the Reformer from Zurich believed that the elements were simply memorials of the death of our Lord, of his body and of his blood. I think in evangelicalism I think that all evangelicals follow the Zwinglian view and speak of the elements as memorials of our Lord's sacrifice and in fact, I think even among Calvinist who would like to follow Calvin they find it very difficult to explain exactly what Calvin did believe. I know for myself it's not easy to explain what he meant it maybe possible that more is meant than is meant by the theory of the elements being a memorial but it's very difficult to put it into words that stand up under investigation. And so the actual result is that even in most Calvinistic churches incidentally, the Zwinglian view is followed.

When I was in Scotland and I was in several of the Reformed churches there the Scottish Presbyterian Churches the Church of Scotland, when the time for the Lord's Supper came and the minister stood up to talk about the Lord's Supper and officiate at the table almost everyone that I ever heard did nothing more than explain the Zwinglian view

thinking all the time I guess that they were following the Calvinistic view. But it is very difficult to distinguish so we'll just say that the Zwinglian view the memorial view is the most popular view and as far as I know that memorial element is predominate in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

The Purposes of the Supper: Well, the Bible teaches us in 1 Corinthians 11 that commemoration of our Lord's death is one of the important purposes. It also teaches in the twenty-sixth verse of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that the Lord's Supper is a time of the proclamation of the death of Christ. Look at that twenty-sixth verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 the apostle says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drinks this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." So that there is a proclamation of the death of Christ in the observance of the Lord's Supper; by the way, that is why in the Lord's Supper unsaved people should have an invitation to come to the Lord's Supper but they should be, of course, admonished that they should not take of the elements, because this is a pictorial presentation of the things that happened when our Lord Jesus died. So when the elements are taken the bread suggesting the body of our Lord and the wine suggesting the blood and the comments that are made concerning what he did on the cross well that's the essence of the gospel; is it not? So he says, "As often as you take of these elements you proclaim you preach (the Greek word is *karuso*) which means to preach, you preach the Lord's death until he comes."

I remember many years ago a young girl coming into a meeting in Believer's Chapel of about twenty-five or thirty years ago. And she was in the meeting on Sunday morning and she was asked to sit back because her family knew she was not a Christian and they were visiting preparing her to go into a camp which began on the Monday or Sunday night, and the family set back and the girl set back and I happened to be out at the camp on Friday night when they had the fireside service and some of the kids were giving their testimony of the things that had happened to them during the week and this little girl stood up and she said, "I came to Dallas last Sunday morning and I was not a

believer in Christ I was not a Christian and said, I went into the meeting on Sunday morning when the Lord's Supper was observed and I sat back and when the elements were passed it came home to my mind again that I was lost, and during this week I have found the Lord as my personal Savior." One of the things that led to her finding Christ was sitting at the Lord's table and thinking about her lost condition when she was not able to participate of the element.

C. The Prerequisites for Participation: Well, I think we made that kind of plain a person should be converted the elements are for believers. I do believe the New Testament teaches that the pattern is for a person to believe and then be baptized in water and then to begin to meet with the local church so I think that is the pattern that we should observe. And ideally a person should hear the gospel, believe, be baptized in water and testimony to it then take his place among the saints in the local church and observe the Lord's Supper.

It is also necessary the apostle makes that plain here in verses 27 through 31 that a person to partake of the Lord's Supper must be in a relationship with the Lord in which there is no sin that is condemning him or that the Lord is speaking to him concerning. We read in verse 27,

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, but let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep; but if we judged ourselves rightly we would not be judged."

Therefore I think it's a good idea for us at the Lord's table to ask ourselves always the question is there something in which I have specifically displeased our Lord. Of

course, we're not saying that if we cannot find anything or if we have one thing and we confess it we are therefore perfect, we don't mean that at all. Because there are many ways in which we offend by which we are totally ignorant and we should remember that we are always sinners as long as we're in the flesh. But there are some things that do hinder our relationship to the Lord and a daily sin or a sin does hinder our fellowship with the Lord, just like disobedience hinders the fellowship with a child with his father. And that is the thing that a person should judge himself with reference to that's what Paul means when he says if we judged ourselves rightly we should not be judged, but when we are judged we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned with the world. So we would say then, as far as, the prerequisite for participation is concerned we should be converted. Ideally, we should be baptized in water and we should be experiencing a communion with the Lord.

The Necessity of the Observance: Well, the apostle says in verse 24, "This is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me." This was the apostolic practice and apostolic practice as a general rule is apostolic precept so I think it is fair to say that it is necessary that believer's observe the Lord's Supper.

I wish I had time to read some things to you but John Calvin in the institute says that a person ought to observe the Lord's Supper weekly. John Wesley observed the Lords' Supper weekly with the early Methodist societies. Charles Haddon Spurgeon says that the Lord's Supper should be observed weekly. Here is a Presbyterian, a Methodist and a Baptist and all agree that the Lord's Supper should be observed weekly.

Isn't it strange that in our Protestant Churches, as a general rule the Lord's Supper is observed quarterly? That was not the practice of the early church, certainly did not seem to be the practice of the apostles and the New Testament lays before us the necessity of observing it so far as, we can tell from the use of the imperative "frequently." We should not, of course, think that if we don't observe the Lord's Supper every week we have thereby sinned. There are occasions that make it necessary for us to miss, but it

seems to me that the ideal is for us to observe the Lord's Supper frequently, it's pleasing to the Lord and was the practice of the early church, so far as, we can tell.

The apostle speaks of the peril of unworthy judgment we've already talked about that; therefore, there should be preparation before participation. Do you know that the evangelical church and the not simply the Calvinistic branch put the congregational branches such as the Baptist in the last century and before that had what they called preparation meetings and they frequently occurred on Saturday, either Saturday afternoon or Saturday night, before the observance of the Lord's Supper. This was done incidentally, among the Baptist in Texas, a few generations ago and in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches; for example, it has been a practice, it's been a practice in many of the other churches, when the Lord's Supper was to be observed on Sunday they had meetings on Saturday which were designed to be times in which the saints gathered and examined their lives. And if there was need for confession of sin it was a time for confession and in this way they properly prepared themselves for the observance of the Lord's Supper the next day because it was a serious thing for them to sit down and partake of the table in an unworthy manner. So it wouldn't hurt us you know on Saturday night before the partaking of the Lord's Supper on Sunday night to review the spiritual condition, in which we are, all of us.

There have been some objections to frequent observance and I know that you have run across a number of them. Let me give you some of them. I don't remember I think I did; yes, I did put most of them here. You've often heard people say the Bible does not command weekly observance. Well, that's true I've said that tonight but it also does not tell us that we are not to observe it weekly either. There are some who say, "Well, it's legalistic to observe it every Sunday." No. It's not legalistic to observe it every Sunday. What is legalism? Well, legalism is to do something with a view to obtaining merit it's not legalism to obey the word of God that's obedience, that's grace. Because we know we don't obey it apart from the grace of God, but we respond to the commands of

God in obedience counting upon the power of God to enable us to do them. That's not legalism that's obedience. It's not legalism to observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday it is simply obedience, it's legalism if we do it thinking that by doing this in our own power we can gain merit before God, if we sit at the Lord's table in order to get up after the meetings over and say well, I made a few points with the Lord tonight. Then, of course, that is a legalistic attitude, but I hope that's not the way in which we do come to the Lord's table.

Then there are some who say what it makes the Lord's Supper too common if we can put it off once every month or once every quarter or once every six months then it wouldn't be so common. I must confess I've always been amused by this and I usually reply in a very blunt way, "Then I presume you don't pray very often either?" [Laughter] Because the privilege of prayer would make prayer common and no one would ever say we shouldn't pray frequently because it makes prayer common. It is just as ridiculous for us to say we shouldn't observe the Lord's Supper frequently because it would make it common.

And then there are those who say I don't get anything out of it. We don't come to the Lord's Supper primarily or preeminently to get something out of it. We come to worship we come to give and when we give we will get. It's perfectly all right to expect to get something but we don't come simply to get something at the Lord's table we come in order to give.

Then there are those who say well, I'd like to hear a sermon. Well, if we had a vital meeting at the Lord's table here at Believer's Chapel you might get two or three sermons and there might be a good one in there too. [Laughter] Ideally, I expect in Believer's Chapel through the years we are going to see the Lord raise up in our meetings men who have gifts, and we're not going to have not simply one good sermon but three or four that's fine. I sympathize a little with this because I have been at meetings of the Lord's table when it was primarily singing and praying and giving personal experiences

which to me is not nearly so edifying as to have a stress on the word of God. I do think that the ministry of the word is important at the Lord's table.

But ideally, we should have that and Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 in verse 26 expresses it I think very well. Would you turn there just for a moment? 1 Corinthians 14:26, here the apostle says as he describes the early church meeting, "What is the outcome my brethren when you assemble each one has a song, has a teaching, (that's a sermon) has a teaching, has a revelation (that's a prophecy) has a tongue (some of these of course, have passed off the scene as gifts) has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." It was evident the early church met and there was freedom for the men with gifts and freedom for the Priest to participate as we should talk about in a moment.

Then there are those who say it is not my churches custom. Well, I have put our little ditty here, "Custom which all mankind to slavery brings that dull excuse for doing stupid things." [Laughter] You know I have a very good friend, he's now with the Lord and we use to have a lot of interesting discussions together; and we had discussions about the doctrine of the church, he attended the Southern Baptist church in the city and we had such a good relationship that we could just hit each other over the head with any kind of brick from the Bible that we could find [Laughter] you know. And I asked him I said, "Jim you know the Bible teaches that we should meet together and have freedom of utterance of spiritual gifts and priesthood among the men in church meeting; and I said why don't you observe that in your church?" And he said, "Well, Louis, I guess its just custom." And I ran across this quotation just the next week after I talked to him [Laughter] and so I came back and gave it to him and he really did have a laugh over it, but it's the truth we do so many things in the Christian Church because of custom. Was it not Tertullian who said that, "Custom is nothing but error grown old."? So custom if it is not truth it is error grown old so we want to avoid that kind of thing.

Now the final one is the ultimate odd-homonym argument this is "Brethernism": Well, as far as, I'm concerned the Chapel, Believers Chapel has never been associated

with the Brethren in any kind of official capacity and, so far as, I know the elders never intend for it to be associated with them in any kind of official capacity. It is true the so called Plymouth Brethren do observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday and there are certain things that we would agree with them about but there are things we agree with the Baptists about or with the Presbyterians about or they agree with us about. This is the ultimate odd-homonym argument because when someone says it's Brethernism well the Brethren have been noted for their divisions and for their fights down through the years and consequently, if you identified with them that's pretty bad.

But the important thing is to return to what the scripture says, not to odd-homonym arguments but to odd-rym arguments; that is, those arguments that are really on point and it's what the Bible teaches, and if the Brethren believe it or if the Presbyterians believe it or the Baptist believe it we don't follow it because they do, we follow it because it is found in the word of God and I do hope that that is the attitude of all of us.

Now, tonight we want to take a look at the priesthood of the believer and it is necessary for us to hurry a little bit in order for us to try and catch up but I think that we can cover the essential material in our twenty minutes that are left.

Perhaps the greatest deterrent to scriptural practice in church life is indifference and ignorance of the ecclesiological teaching of the Bible. That's not the whole problem. Some of the difficulty is traceable simply to the acceptance of custom for scripture, as we just have been talking about. Now, we're introducing another important subject when we talk about priesthood, unfortunately, custom reign supreme in the question of priesthood in the local church. In the Protestant Churches the individual aspect of priesthood as it touches the individual life of the believer is practiced in the churches, but the relation of the doctrine to the local church is a mystery.

Now, what I mean by that is simply this that I think that in the Protestant Churches there is recognition of the fact that every believer is a priest of God. We talk about

believer priesthood. That's something Martin Luther is responsible for revivifying in the Protestant Church and through Luther's teaching and specially is controversy with the Church at Rome. As a result of this the Reformers established the principle in the Reformed Church that every believer is a priest of God and that we're not to look at he priesthood as a separate group of people like the Old Testament Levitical Priesthood.

Biblically there exist three offices in the local church: The elder, the elder is the one who leads, and feeds, and guards, and disciples the flock; the deacons who are helpers of the elders and who are responsible for the temple affairs; and then the priest, the priest is also an officer in the local church if we can speak of priesthood as an office and I see no objection to doing that providing we understand the primary point is the function of the priest.

So The Priest: Let me make a few deductions from this, from this we can make a few deductions; first, every believer is an officer in the local church. That is we have believers who are elders, we have believers who are deacons, and then we have every believer a priest and; in fact, if this is true if every member of the local church holds the office of priest some people in the local church holds two offices; they are elders or deacons and priests.

So first of all, every believer is an officer in the local church if it's accurate to speak of priesthood as an office. And second, some priests may also hold the office of elder or deacon or two offices. But how do these things relate to the life of the local church more specifically?

Now, I have a section here in which I speak of priesthood in the Old Testament. Now, thinking about priesthood for just a moment, what is the essential ideal of priesthood? Well, the essential ideal of priesthood is that it is necessary for a mediator to function in order for man to have fellowship with God. So the Levitical Priesthood was set forth in the Old Testament as a mediatorial function and they carried out that mediatorial function so that Israel might have fellowship with God.

Now, of course, in priesthood it must be God who appoints the priest because a divinely instituted priesthood as a necessity for fellowship with a divine being. Now, we could not say, "Well, we would like to have relationship with the Lord so we will invent our own priesthood." In the nature of the case God being the infinite God must himself determine who will be the mediators between his created beings and himself and that's why a priest must be appointed by God; the Lord Jesus was appointed by God as the mediator between God and men. He is the High Priest in the priestly company appointed by God. But access to God is the aim of all spiritual service and all religions have some form of priesthood but there's is only one that has a divinely ordained priesthood and that's Christianity.

The priest was the source of spiritual knowledge and the channel of spiritual life and worship. Now in the organization of the Levitical Priesthood, let me just remind you of some of the parts of it. The Levites remember; members of the tribe of Levi were responsible for the duties connected with the Tabernacle and the Temple. They were responsible for with what we would call the temporal functions. They were responsible for putting up the Tabernacle and taking it down with the children of Israel moved. In a sense you could think of them as deacons, but the Bible does not. I'm just only suggesting a comparison, the Levites they belonged to the tribe of Levi.

Then the family of Aaron was the priestly family and they were the ones who ministered in the sacrifices. We've seen in the burnt offering, and the meal offering, and peace offering that the individual Israelite brought his offering to the Tabernacle and there the priest after he had slain it takes the blood and sprinkles it on the mercy seat. Then in the family of Aaron, the specific family of Aaron and in the descent from him there was the high priest. Aaron was the high priest, and Aaron's son, Eliezer and so forth.

So in the organization of the Levitical Priesthood there were Levites, there were priests who carried on the daily sacrifices and then the high priest and his greatest responsibility was what? [Comment] the Day of Atonement, and it was he who on the

Day of Atonement went in and accomplished the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement that maintained Israel in fellowship with the Lord for another year under the covenant requirements.

B. The Functions of the Levitical Priesthood: The primary functions of the priesthood were these; they were to offer sacrifice, they were to make intercession. Incidentally, the two together, sacrifice and intercession made up the essentials of worship. And then third, they were to teach the law so the priest were responsible for teaching.

Now, we are taught in the Old Testament that the Old Testament, Levitical cultist had its limitations, for example, it had a limited personal because unfortunately Aaron and his sons died. And consequently, it was necessary for Aaron to be succeeded by someone else. Now, it maybe that the high priest was a very fine person and the children of Israel might be very responsive to that individual, but looking at the sons, as the sons of Eli, for example, they might have been terrible characters. And so Israel went through the sad experience of having a good priest, and then a bad priest, and a good priest, and a bad priest because they were not sufficient to continue in the office of priesthood because they were mortal. So their priesthood was limited, our Lord Jesus is the Eternal Priest and consequently, we are always pleased with him. We don't have to be worried about a successor that we might not be so happy with.

Furthermore, they had a limited access, only once a year was the high priest able to enter into the holiest suggestive of the fact that until our Lord died on the cross there was a limited access to God in the Old Testament period and, of course, it had a limited validity because the sacrifices that they offered were animal sacrifices and, therefore, they did not obtain the forgiveness of sins.

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: The full exposition of the priesthood of Jesus Christ is found in Hebrews, we only mention a couple of points of interest. The organization of the priesthood of Jesus Christ is very simple we all seen organizational

charts, this is an organizational chart that only has one name because he is the High Priest. His office is unique, it's a divine office, he alone is called a Priest in the New Testament, we only serve as priests under him so he's the High Priest and he has no successors.

The Function: Well, in the case of our Lord he offered the one sacrifice that removed sin and gave access and he lives to intercede as a result of it.

Let's come now to the priesthood of the church. The main outlines of the priestly aspect to the ministry of the local church are clear: the High Priest is Jesus Christ. I think maybe we've got time to look at a few of these chapters let's turn to Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 1. Here the writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling consider Jesus the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." He is the High Priest.

Now, being the High Priest, of course, he is the antitype of which Aaron was a type. He's the antitype of which Melchizedek was a type.

The Priestly Personal: Well, in the priestly personnel the whole church each member of the body of Christ is a priest. Let's look at a couple of these passage 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 4 and 5, 1 Peter 2:4-5, here Peter writes: "But coming to him as to a living stone rejected of men but chose and precious in the sight of God, you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." So Peter says that the body is a priesthood, a holy priesthood, and it is our duty to offer up spiritual sacrifices so everyone of us is a priest.

Now, I've put here in the notes Philippians chapter 3 and verse 3 where Paul speaks about worshipping God because that does it seem involve priesthood. If you look at the thrust of the passages on priesthood you will see that the major thrust of the New Testament is not so much as individual priesthood as it is corporate priesthood. Now, it's taught that we are each priest, but we form a company of priest.

Now, let's look at the functions. There are in the individual aspect of our priesthood there are several things that pertain to our priestly functions. Romans chapter 12 verse 1 says that, "We are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice." That's a priestly aspect, that's a priestly work. So as a Christian believer my first offering is to offer myself to the Lord.

Now, secondly, we also read the New Testament that we are to offer praise; and third, we read that we are to offer of our substance. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 13 and let me read verse 15 and 16; Hebrews chapter 13 verse 15 and 16: "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God (notice how the writer of the epistle of Hebrews uses priestly terminology) let's offer up a sacrifice of praise." So that's priestly function.

Now, on Sunday night in the meeting of the Lord's Supper when an individual stands up and offers a word of praise it is a function as a priest. So praise. He says, "That is the fruit of lips that gives thanks to his name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing (notice that) for with such sacrifices God is pleased." So you can see that as a priest all of us are priest and our functions as a priest include the giving of ourselves to the Lord, the giving of praise to the Lord, the giving of our money to the Lord, sharing here, and doing good. These are priestly functions so as one preacher has summed it up we offer our person, our praise, and our purse.

In the priesthood of the local church in the present age it is not limited in it's personnel, everybody's a priest; it's not limited in it's approach to God, we approach directly through our great High Priest; nor in it's validity because our great High Priest has offered the one sacrifice that has opened the door into heaven therefore the writer of the epistle of Hebrews urges us to come and dwell in the holiest by the blood of Jesus. So we don't just come into the holiest. He wants us to dwell in the holy place with the Lord. It's amazing. We'll talk more about that when we expound Leviticus and come to it.

The corporate aspect is referred to in the passage that I read in 1 Peter. But let's look at one in the book of Revelation chapter 1 verse 4 and verse 5, Revelation chapter 1 and verse 4 and verse 5. Here we read:

"John, to the seven churches that are in Asia grace and to you and peace from him who is and was and is to come and from the seven spirits that are before his Throne. And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth to him who loves us and released us from our sin by his blood and he hath made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever."

[Message] Notice again it's kind of a corporate ideal yet also and individual ideal too "He's made us a priest to his God and Father." A kingdom of priests; now, the meaning of this then is that as a group we are priests of God and therefore, we exercise these functions; the place at which we exercise or priestly functions in the corporate sense is the meeting of the church. That's when we exercise or corporate function as priest. So in Believer's Chapel on Sunday night at the Lord's Supper we have freedom for the men to stand or their feet to give a word of praise. And also we do give in other ways seek to exercise our function as a priest.

I think this is extremely important and I think it's also important to remember that this is what the New Testament teaches. We are so inclined to think that because so many churches around us have a kind of meeting in which one man plays the dominate role that that is the kind of thing that we must do, but the New Testament does not teach that. Let me remind you of what William Barkley, who did not actually practice this said, he says, "Clearly the early church had no professional ministry; truly the apostle stood out with a very special authority but at this stage the church had no professional local ministry it was open to anyone who had a gift to use that gift." He could have gone on to say it

was open for anyone who was a priest to exercise his priestly function. Then he says, "There was obviously a flexibility about the order of service in the early church which is now totally lacking. There was clearly no settled order at all. Everything was informal enough to allow any man who felt that he had a message to give to give it. It may well be that we set far too much store on dignity and order now a days. It may well be that we have become slaves of orders of service. The really notable thing about an early church service must have been that almost everyone came feeling that he had both the privilege and the obligation of contributing something to it. The man did not come with the sole intention of being a passive listener. He did not come only to receive he came also to give.

Obviously, this had it's dangers for it's clear that in Corinth there were those who were too fond of the sound of their own voices but nevertheless, the church must have been in those days much more the real possession of the ordinary Christian. It may well be that the church lost something when she delegated too much to the professional ministry and left so little to the ordinary church member. And it may well be that the blame lies not with the ministry for annexing those rights, but with the laity for abandoning them, because it's all too true that there are many church members whose attitude is that they think far more of what the church can do for them than of what they can do for the church and who is and very ready to criticize what is done but very unready to take any share in doing the churches work themselves. So in the early church there was the expression of priesthood in praise, in worship, in giving, and in the early church there was freedom for the exercise of this function.

I think the obvious advantages of it has been set forth very well by Professor Barkley, although, he was talking about ministry, the same thing holds true with reference to priesthood.

We have minute does anyone have a question; I don't' mean to cut you off entirely.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well, of course, the way in which he kept from being slain; first of all, it was God's word that told him to do what he did, if you remember. So in that sense God himself saw to it that if he obeyed his Word he would not be destroyed by shekinah glory. But you may also remember and we will talk about this and when we get to Leviticus chapter 16 and the exposition of Leviticus and typology. But he first of all had to bring a sacrifice for himself. Remember? And that sacrifice for himself prepared the way for him later to be able to take the blood into the mercy seat. He also took some coals from off the altar and also filled the holiest of all with incense. Suggesting again, that he was approaching only in the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ. So he had to offer for himself first and then for the people, and God arranged it of course, to get over the point you're talking about that he didn't have the right to approach individually.

Maybe another question, yes, Randall?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] All women are priest just as men are priest, but Paul's further directions concerning the conduct of the church meeting demand that the women be silent in the meeting; so far as, vocal expression of their priesthood, but of course, they are perfectly free to worship the Lord, and praise the Lord, and they can give a lot too if they want too. So in other words, they do exercise their priesthood and I'm quite sure that many of them do a much better job of it than those of us who talk, but they are not allowed to participate vocally in it.

Any other question?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] That's in the commentary on 1 Corinthians in chapter 14, I believe; yes, William Barkley, the letters to the Corinthians pages 149 and 50, Ron.

Well, our time is up let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we do thank thee for these things that are found in thy word and again we ask Lord that thou would help us...

[TAPE ENDS ABRUPTLY]