

"YE KNOW YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN."

"But ye are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

– 1 Peter 2:9.

"VOCATION" is the term that describes the special business of any person, while the word "avocation" describes an occasional business; as, the Apostle Paul's vocation was that of a minister of the Truth, while his avocation, or occasional employment when necessary to provide things honest and decent in the sight of God and men, was tent-making. Similarly all of the Lord's people should consider that their vocation or calling is of God, and relates to the special or spiritual ministry in which he privileges us to engage as fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to provide the necessities of life for ourselves and those dependent on us, it is necessary that we should have some earthly employment also; but this we should always regard, not as our vocation – not as our chief or principal business in life – but merely as our avocation, or temporary engagement incidentally necessary to our chief business. Of course it would not be wise for the Lord's people to speak of spiritual things from this standpoint to worldly people. Our Lord warned us against so doing, saying, "Cast not your pearls before swine" – attempt not to tell the deep and precious things that belong to you as spiritual New Creatures in Christ, and which you only can understand and appreciate through the holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14), to those who have not the Spirit and who cannot comprehend your teachings and who would be disappointed in the matter, as swine would be disappointed if you gave them pearls which they could not appreciate, instead of corn which they could appreciate. In our own hearts, however, and amongst the "brethren," this thought should always be uppermost; namely, that our calling, or business, or vocation is of God, – that we are called to be members of the Royal Priesthood.

We are viewing our text just now specially from the standpoint of the Priesthood, or new race, or new nation, different from the remainder of mankind in that God has invited them to become joint-heirs with his Son in the great Royal Priesthood which he designs shall ultimately bless all the families of the earth. The royal feature of the matter belongs to the future; we have no royalty yet. It is only in prospect; it will be attained after we have faithfully performed the service which belongs to this present time and have thus proven ourselves worthy, according to the divine terms, to be members of the glorified Priesthood through our Lord Jesus' merit, and under him as our Head. Meantime it behooves us to learn distinctly what is expected of us as respects our vocation in the present time; what obligations attach to us as those who have made the consecration and have been respectively accepted to this Royal Priesthood and anointed with the holy Spirit in anticipation of our attainment of the goal.

The Apostle Paul (Heb. 8:3) declares that "Every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man [the man Christ Jesus] have somewhat also to offer." The thought is that the High Priest serves, – is as an offerer or sacrificer to God. True, the Apostle is speaking here of our Lord Jesus and not of us, but from his own words elsewhere we will know that it is expected of all the members of the body that they shall be joint sharers with their Lord and Master in the sufferings and sacrifices of this present time, that they may be counted worthy to share with him the glories of the future. And the same Apostle explains **[R3265 : page 406]** that he (Christ) is our Head, and that we are, as members of his body, "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," walking in his footsteps. The lesson, then, to each member of this Royal Priesthood, is that the special mission of their office, vocation, calling in the present time, is to sacrifice.

In the light of the Apostle's explanation we can see that our Lord Jesus as the Head Priest had something to offer to God, and that he did offer it in that he offered up himself a sacrifice. (Heb. 7:27.) We can

see how his sacrifice could be acceptable to God, because in him was no sin – he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. But how can we, who "by nature are children of wrath even as others," – how can we fulfil our mission as priests to present some offering to God when we have nothing which is our own that would be acceptable, because all we have and are is by nature tainted with sin and under divine condemnation? The Scriptures answer that "that which God hath cleansed," his people are no longer to consider common or unclean; they tell us that God has justified us freely from our imperfections through the merit of Christ's sacrifice; they tell us that we are acceptable to God "in the Beloved."

The Apostle carries this same thought further, and emphasizes it, saying, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God [no longer aliens, strangers, foreigners, but redeemed and accepted of the Father], that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1.) Here the entire matter is summed up. We are not to consider any longer that, after being justified by faith, the Lord esteems us unholy and unacceptable, but are to understand that the very object of our present justification by faith was to make us acceptable to the Father, to make us to be priests, to furnish us opportunities to do the work of a priest in this present time; namely, to sacrifice – to sacrifice ourselves – to present our bodies living sacrifices to God through Christ's merit. What a wonderful plan! what a wonderful privilege to be permitted to be priests! what a gracious arrangement! It gives us opportunity of completing the priestly service of sacrificing now, to the intent that by and by we may enjoy the privileges of the other part of the priest's work, connected with the glory and royalty of the Millennial Kingdom.

If then God ordained the High Priest to offer sacrifices, and that was the particular feature of his calling while on earth, so likewise it is the particular feature of the calling of all those who would walk in his steps – ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. The Apostle

Peter calls this same matter to our attention in a verse preceding our text (v. 5), where he declares the Church "A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Ah, but, says one, the Apostles differ respecting what shall be our sacrifices. The Apostle Paul declares, "Present your body a living sacrifice," while the Apostle Peter here declares that we should offer up spiritual sacrifices, and our bodies are certainly not spiritual bodies. We reply that the word "*spiritual*" in this text is not found in the oldest Greek manuscript, known as the *Sinaitic*. Apparently some scribe of about the fourth or fifth century must have concluded that the Apostle had left his statement of the matter incomplete, and that there would be danger of some understanding him to mean that the Royal Priesthood should offer bullocks and goats; and to hinder such a construction of the Apostle's language, the no doubt well-meaning copyist added the word "*spiritual*."

But in the light of Present Truth we can see that he erred in attempting to assist the inspiration which guided the Apostle to a proper statement of the matter. We can see most clearly that our Lord Jesus did not offer a *spiritual* sacrifice, but a *human* sacrifice for sin – that for this reason it was necessary that he should leave the spiritual condition in which he previously existed and should take upon him human conditions, – become a man, – that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man. Adam was not a spirit being when he sinned, hence God's sentence was not against a spirit being, but, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Hence it was necessary that the Lord Jesus should become the *man* Christ Jesus; that as by a *man* came death, so also by *man* should come the resurrection of the dead. And as our Lord's sacrifice was not a spiritual sacrifice but a human one, so it is also with our sacrifice: we are not to sacrifice our spiritual natures nor our spiritual interests nor anything else that is spiritual; but we are to sacrifice our justified human natures, our justified flesh, as the Apostle urges, "Present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The question should now properly arise in the minds of all who realize themselves as consecrated to the Lord, as members of the Royal Priesthood, to what extent am I fulfilling my present priestly office, and performing daily as I may have opportunity my appointed work of sacrifice – laying down my life for the brethren? Too many, alas! under the false teachings of Babylon, both in word and in custom, [R3266 : page 406] have come to consider that money getting and honor getting and ease getting and general self-preservation constitute the reasonable service of the Lord's people. Sacrificers are looked upon as deluded fanatics – especially in proportion as the sacrificing is done for the Truth's sake in the interest of spiritual things. We are not, however, to be taught of the world, nor by a cold worldly-wise churchianity; but we are to hearken to the voice of the good Shepherd, to hear his Word, to learn of him if we would be prepared by him in the school of Christ for the glorious things promised us as his joint-heirs in the future. "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him," is the message.

We can see how the Apostle, even though finding it at times necessary to engage in the business of tentmaking, might be considered as a priest whose time, energy, talents were all sacrificed to the Lord and given freely in serving his people – in doing good unto all men as he had opportunity, especially [R3266 : page 407] unto the household of faith: but how can others who have not the opportunity, not the talents, not the open door for such special service as his – how can those who must provide for their own household according to the Lord's Word, be sacrificing priests, when as a matter of necessity nearly all of their time must be given to tent making, shoe making, housework, or whatever other employment providence seems to have opened before them as their avocations? When it is necessary to spend nearly all of eight to twelve hours per day continuously in the service of our avocations, how can we consider or serve the interests of our vocation, the priesthood?

The Lord has very graciously made arrangements adapted to this very condition. He assures us in his Word that it is not the amount we shall accomplish in his cause, but the spirit, the desire and the effort which we manifest that in his esteem would indicate the degree of our self-sacrifice. He graciously declares that if our hearts be given to him, whatsoever we do may be done as unto the Lord, and if done as unto him will be accepted by him. From this standpoint we can see that the work which the Apostle Paul did upon the tents passed to his credit as a part of his priestly sacrifice, just as much as the other part of his time which he spent in more congenial methods of proclaiming the gospel. Similarly, we can see that the shoemaker working at his bench, or the tinner at his labor, or the butcher in his shop, or the housekeeper, if at heart fully consecrated to the Lord, would be seeking to do their work as unto the Lord, and that if careful to use his opportunities for proclaiming the Truth, for serving the brethren, for doing good unto all men as opportunity afforded, the improvement of the few opportunities coming to them and their willingness to sacrifice personal tastes and convenience for the service of the Truth and for the brethren, would be counted by the Lord as a full sacrifice, because such a disposition in respect to little things would imply an equal faithfulness in the presence of larger opportunities. Luke 16:10.

This does not mean that the Lord's people are to be content with the usual routine of daily life in the home or in the shop, and are to say to themselves, "God accepts my labor as thoroughly as though it were given directly to him in some other more desirable form," but it does mean that each person so situated should day by day carefully scan his earthly duties and obligations to see in what manner he could justly and properly cut off moments, hours or days from the service of earthly things and earthly interests, that now might be given to sacrifice for spiritual things and spiritual interests of himself or others. The consecrated heart, the sacrificing priest, is the one who will improve the moments as they swiftly fly, using them as far as possible in the Father's business. For instance, a workman may not take his employer's time to talk religion to his mate, for that would be unjust

and contrary to the divine arrangement; but in the noon hour he may improve opportunities, and instead of engaging in worldly or foolish conversation or rude jest, he will seek to use opportunities to tell the good tidings to others; or if he have no such opportunities, finding no hearing ears, he will use the time in spiritually uplifting himself by study of the teachings and principles of the divine Word. In the evening he may not neglect duties of a social nature toward his wife and children, but will remember that under the divine arrangement he has some obligation toward them in respect to their mental and spiritual development as well as for their temporal necessities, and he will seek to use a part of his time in their service, perhaps sacrificing an inclination to read some story or light literature, or to indolently while away the time doing nothing. In addition to thinking of his obligations toward his family, he will think beyond them of his own spiritual needs and of the Lord's family and their necessities, and will endeavor to judge of the mind of the Lord in respect to how each moment shall be used. He consecrated every hour, every moment, when he presented himself a living sacrifice to the Lord; and the opportunities of laying down moments and hours in the interests of his New Creature and in the interests of spiritual brethren, etc., are coming and going daily, and the Lord is looking to see to what extent he was a sincere covenanter, sacrificer. These sacrifices on behalf of neighbors, friends, wife, children, husband, parents, are accepted of the Lord if done as a result of consecration to him, and as a result of the believing that these are the opportunities which his providence has opened for exhibitions of the self-sacrificing spirit.

The same opportunities, though in a different form, come to the youth who is under age and subject to his parents, and to the wife surrounded by family cares and duties. If the consecration be to the Lord, then every sacrifice of our just rights and interests on behalf of ourselves as New Creatures, on behalf of husbands or children, father or mother, neighbors or friends, brethren in Christ, is counted of the Lord as so much done to him; whereas if the very same services were rendered from any other standpoint – by any one unjustified, and not

consecrated to the Lord, or merely done to the individuals and not as a sacrifice unto the Lord – these things would not count to us as priests, as our sacrifices; but when viewed from the standpoint of consecration to the Lord, and faithfully performed as being our best judgment of what would be the Lord's will concerning our use of our time, interests, talents, etc., they are sacrifices wholly acceptable to God, our reasonable service.

We are to remember that abstaining from immoralities, from sins, is not sacrificing. Nothing can be acceptably sacrificed to the Lord that is not of itself right, just, proper. It may be imperfect, as all that we have and do are necessarily blemished by reason of our share with the race in its fall; but unintentional blemishes of proper things are all covered by the merits of our Redeemer's sacrifice, as we have just seen. Another form of sacrifice frequently not discerned by the Royal Priesthood is the opportunity of renouncing our own ways or plans, our own methods or preferences, and in the interests of peace **[R3266 : page 408]** accepting instead the plans, the preferences of others – where it is merely a matter of personal preference, and where we believe the Lord will be as willing to have the matter one way as another. We can in the interests of peace sacrifice our preferences to the wishes of others if we see some good can be gained by such a course; as, for instance, the preservation of the peace of the home or the opportunity of winning our opponent to the Truth, or any good cause. Such sacrifices are pleasing to the Lord, who instructs us through the Apostle that, so far as in us lies, we should live peaceably with all men; and that we should rather suffer wrong and take injury from a brother in Christ than take the matter before the world of unbelievers and thus risk a general odium upon the Lord's cause. – Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 6:7.

We have known cases, however, where dear brethren in the interests of peace and harmony yielded their rights – and properly enough where no principle was involved – but who, nevertheless, held a kind of grudge against those to whom they had yielded, feeling that

somehow or other they had been defrauded of their rights. This is wrong, and indicates that the sacrifice was not fully made. If the matter in dispute had been fully sacrificed, as unto the Lord, there would surely have been no room for feeling that it had been taken from them. Under such circumstances the Lord's dear followers would do well to make haste to cast out of their minds anything akin to resentment and the feeling that they had been deprived of their just rights, and, instead, to take into their hearts that they had fully, freely, absolutely given up the matter in the interests of peace and it was dead, buried forever, with no resentment toward any one, but, on the contrary, with the feeling of joy and rejoicing that this matter had been sacrificed to the Lord, to the interests of the home or the Church or what not, because they believed that it would be pleasing, acceptable to him, and, therefore, their reasonable service.

We are to remember that we have each but one sacrifice; that it is to be rendered to the Lord day by day in the improvement of every opportunity, as it comes to us, to serve him and his. We are to remember that while it consists of many little sacrifices, some of them too small to mention or even to consider, nevertheless it will require all of these to complete the one sacrifice which we made at the beginning of our induction into his family. When we gave our wills, our hearts, we gave our all; and any holding back in any of the little affairs of life – any refusal to sacrifice that which we think would please the Lord – is a keeping back of that much of what we have devoted to him.

The Lord is very patient toward us, and gives us repeated opportunities to accomplish the work of sacrifice; but it must be accomplished, our wills **[R3267 : page 408]** must be slain, must be submitted to the Lord's will, else we shall never attain to joint-heirship with him in the Kingdom – never become members of the overcoming Royal Priesthood. He graciously gives us line upon line, lesson upon lesson, respecting this subject; shows it to us in his Word from different standpoints, impressing upon us the necessity of being dead

to self and alive toward God through Jesus Christ our Lord – the necessity of developing the various graces of the Spirit which are implied in this sacrificing work. Every one who will be a sacrificer must of necessity be meek, humble, teachable, else very shortly he will get out of the way. He must also learn to develop the grace of the Lord along the line of patience, because it certainly requires patience to deny ourselves and to submit at times to injustice where there is no proper means of avoiding it without doing injury to the Lord's cause or to some of his people. It also implies a cultivation of brotherly kindness and, in a word, the development of the whole will of God in our hearts and lives; namely, love, which must be attained in a large and overcoming measure ere we shall have completed our earthly work of sacrificing.

In our studies of the "Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices," we saw that every one who took part in the priesthood was required to wash his hands and feet at the laver. We saw that the laver represented the Word, or message of God, and that the water, therefore, represented the Truth; and thus it is the Truth which is to cleanse the Royal Priesthood from the defilements of the flesh. As a whole we are clean, being covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness; but in our contact with the world we are to seek to put away the defilements of earth which come to us in connection with our daily walk and service, represented by our feet and our hands. And the Apostle, in the verse preceding our text, is not forgetful to mention this cleansing which all must have in order to be acceptable as members of the Royal Priesthood. In the verses 1 to 3, inclusive, he mentions that those who would be Royal Priests must lay aside "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies and all evil speakings." As the sacrificing requires all of the present life, so the washing requires all the present life; and only those who both wash and sacrifice will be accepted into the glorious Royal Priesthood of the future.

It will be noticed that the Apostle does not represent that these priests will wash themselves from murders and gross sins, for those

who have been begotten of the holy Spirit are necessarily far removed from any sympathy with any of the grosser forms of sin. What he does show is the more refined forms of evil which still infest the flesh, even of those who have the new mind, and which require to be mortified, rooted out, cleansed away. How "close girdling" are these sins that are mentioned – how many of the prospective members of the Royal Priesthood find that they have defilements along this line, malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking! It is safe to say that every one has some, if not all of these weaknesses in the flesh to contend with – especially at the beginning of his entrance upon the priestly vocation. How carefully all should seek to put all these away! how each should scrutinize, not only every act of life and every word and every thought, but, additionally, every motive underlying his words, thoughts and actions, so that they may be more and **[R3267 : page 409]** more purified from the earth defilements and be more and more acceptable to the Lord!

With our very best endeavors we may never get entirely free from all of these "close girdling" sins while still in the flesh; but one thing is sure – the heart must be free from them, else we can never be accepted as members of the glorious priesthood. The heart must be so completely filled with the love of God that it will feel a repugnance to all of these evils, which are repulsive to the divine mind; and happy for us it is that God has promised to accept such a condition of our hearts, and that knowing the imperfections of the flesh with which we contend, he is not requiring that we shall attain to absolute flesh perfection, but that we shall be pure in heart in order to see him and to share in the glory which he has promised to his people.

What we have seen respecting the perfect love which must dominate our hearts in order to enable us to complete our sacrifice in the Lord, is not so different from the Lord's requirements respecting all his creatures. There could be no angel of heaven acceptable to the Father without this spirit of love, of devotion, which, if the conditions in heaven were similar to the conditions now in the earth, would

prompt and inspire all of the Lord's faithful angels to do good to the needy ones even at the cost of self-sacrifice and inconvenience. We can see that the same law of love must ultimately be required of the world of mankind who shall be developed under the training of the Millennial age, the world's school time. They also must ultimately reach that degree of love which, if the conditions were similar to those which now prevail, would lead them to sacrifice in the interest of the needy. Nothing less than this could be considered as a recovery on man's part of that which was lost – the image and likeness of God.

The peculiarity, then, of this present time and of the Church's position in it, is the fact that we are begotten to the new mind, the new will, the new spirit and law of love, while still sin and death prevail around us. Hence to us living under present conditions, in contact with the weaknesses and imperfections and trials of others, it becomes, necessarily, an evidence of the new mind that, seeing these conditions, we should be permitted to make sacrifices on behalf of the brethren and on behalf of all men as we have opportunity. These indeed are severe testings and trials, which will come to the world of mankind during the Millennial Age, when all conditions will be favorable to the development of the new mind of love. They are more severe testings also than are brought to bear upon the holy angels, who, although possessing this love, have not the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh, the fallen nature, to contend with in its exercise, and who, therefore, can gain no such victory as the Church of Christ is called upon to fight for and by the grace of her Lord to win.

It is on this account that the Lord has attached to this "little flock," now being selected under these self-sacrificing conditions, so great a reward; as it is written, – "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2:9.) Even though God hath revealed these things to us by his Spirit, which searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, nevertheless it is not possible for us to comprehend, know fully. As the Apostle says, we now see these

glorious things of the future through a smoked glass, obscurely; but by and by we shall see face to face and know as we are known, and appreciate fully the wonderful things which God has declared to us through his Son and his faithful apostles. Then the royal feature of this priestly office will be added, and they shall be indeed priests, royal, sons of the Highest, and shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

This royalty, while it will have great dignity, majesty and power, is not attracting us by any illustrations we have in earthly royalty, with its pride and often selfishness and pomp and show. It is attracting us, however, by the glorious things which God hath spoken respecting the work of these Royal Priests – the work of ruling, blessing and uplifting the world of mankind. This glorious hope inspires, encourages and revives the fainting priests who are now sacrificing, and the Lord has so intended. In view of these things let us remember our calling, brethren, and not mistake the avocations of life for the great vocation which God hath set before us in the Gospel. Let us see to it that every day shall witness our faithfulness to our priestly ordination of cleansing, priestly sacrificing, and thus preparing ourselves under the direction of the great High-priest for the glorious work that the heavenly Father has arranged for us in his wonderful plan.

