

## The Priesthood Of God (Part Five)

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**Hebrews 12:5-14** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

In the previous sermon we continued seeing how very much of the instruction regarding the priesthood is focused on becoming and/or maintaining holiness. After being called by God to this position, growing in holiness is without a doubt the single most important requirement for filling that position.

Growing in holiness *is* the sanctification process. This is because the position is so important. Holiness reflects a similitude of God, and the priest stands between God and his worshippers as His agents provided by Him for the very purpose of helping worshippers, by means of instruction and example, to become holy as God is holy.

Under both the Old and New Covenants, God's overall purpose is to create a holy nation. We individually are to become holy and at the same time we are to be aids to help others become holy. This is because all of us, collectively, have been called to be part of the priesthood, and we are in training for that responsibility.

Holy is the term the Bible writers used to designate God's uniqueness. He is separate, different, and brilliantly clean in character. Holy is a general term covering a whole basketful of His divine attributes, all of which evoke a humbling awe and dreadful reverence in humans when in His presence. He is the very zenith of loving purity, and at the same time, frightening power. Incredible as it is, He desires of us that we—in fact, all that He calls, all of mankind eventually—be like Him.

This section of Hebrews is very important toward understanding what we go through following our calling—during the sanctification process. Did you notice that the term “holiness” appears twice in this paragraph which deals with enduring chastening? Why should that be? Becoming holy is often not all that easy, even though most of the time we are not being punished. Chastened, yes. Punished, no. Then why do we have pain, and yet He is not punishing us? Why is this so?

Never forget that God is a Creator. Because we are His very own called and chosen children, He is preparing us, training us, for life in His family Kingdom. Sometimes the training sessions, brethren, are quite severe.

However, because we are under Christ's blood, we are no longer under judgment in the same way that the world is. Yes, God is judging us, God is evaluating us, but always we are under Christ's blood. So we are being evaluated through a process that brings us some suffering and pain. Yes we are. But, we are still not being punished. We are being trained. And sometimes, brethren, the discipline of that training is very hard.

In order to grasp the instructions of Hebrews 12 and our calling, it is helpful to recall the overall theme of Hebrews. Recall that this epistle was written to

a group of Hebrew people who were going through an “end time”—a time in some ways similar to what we are dealing with now. The Hebrews, though, lived in *an* end; they did not live in *the* end.

Their end time dealt with the end of Jewish life in the Promise Land. The temple and all of its accoutrements including the priesthood and sacrifices were coming to a forced ending after having been in operation for about 1400 years. The Jews themselves were to be scattered from the land; and the Christians, who were living in that area, called and converted under Jesus and the apostles, were required by God to deal with those circumstances, while also being persecuted by the Jews over religious issues. But they had two prongs coming at them, two prongs of attack at the same time.

These two factors were putting a great deal of pressure on them. Persevering and holding on to their faith were major issues. Brethren, their zeal was lagging greatly—to the extent that some were on the verge of losing it all together. This chapter, chapter 12, serves to remind them that they were not being punished by God. It was the Jews who were being punished. Rather, what they had to endure was ancillary to the Jews' punishment.

What the Christians had to endure was part of the discipline required to be prepared for God's Kingdom. This same thing is occurring to us. It is the world God is preparing for punishment, and some of that punishment is already coming upon them. We have to deal with it, because we are in the midst of it. But, God is not seeking to punish us. While this punishment of the others is going on, though, we have the opportunity to exercise our faith in the face of what is going on around us so that we will be prepared for the Kingdom of God.

Much of the book of Hebrews is concerned with priesthood, and some of the theme of this chapter actually begins all the way back in Hebrews 2.

**Hebrews 2:9-11** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him [the Father], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain [Jesus] of their salvation perfect [complete, whole] through

sufferings. For both He [Jesus] who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified [us] are all of one, for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren,

The theme of this chapter fits right in to the theme of Hebrews 12. We, brethren, are following in our Savior's footsteps. Our great High Priest was required by our Father in heaven to be prepared for His continuing responsibilities by persevering and learning from his sufferings. So even the High Priest had to go through this kind of thing.

**Hebrews 5:8-10** [T]hough He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

If He had to learn in this manner, why should not those who are being prepared to serve under Him in the Kingdom of God, have to learn through sufferings, since we are all one? That is what the verse said in chapter 2—that is being of the same mold. We are being created into the image of Christ—one family, one priesthood.

It is true that His suffering was unique. It was different, of far greater intensity than what we have to go through, but the principle involved is the same with us. We are following in His footsteps, and sometimes it is painful, but always remember that it is not punishment. There is a big difference between the two.

We are being created into one perfected character, one mindset, so that we all think basically the same way.

**Hebrews 12:5** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

The apostle wants to make sure that we understand that we are not being punished, but disciplined. The concept here is that the discipline may include a painful correction. But the correction is considered as part of an educational process. It is not punishment for doing something evil. The

Israelitish custom was that the father, the head of the house, was responsible to teach his children the law of God, the tradition of the elders, and the skills of a trade. This three-pronged education was intended to inculcate obedience to God's law, respect for authority, and love of the national heritage.

Boy, you can see all three of those are missing in the United States of America. Do people really love this nation anymore, our national heritage? Not very much! We especially see this in our leadership; those people in Washington, DC are setting a terrible example.

Back to God again. God is carrying through on His responsibility as the Head of the family by training us for the World Tomorrow. Now our carnal fathers may have been all over the place with their discipline. But, verse 10 says (of our carnal fathers):

**Hebrews 12:10** For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He [the Father] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

There is the aim as to why this is coming upon us. That we may be partakers of His holiness as God carries through with His responsibilities. So God has a very definite purpose in mind for disciplining us. He wants us to share in His holiness, His uniqueness. God is preparing us for life eternal.

We are going to go now to II Corinthians 4. The apostle Paul made a comment here. I want you to understand as I begin reading this that Paul primarily has the ministry in mind, but again there is a principle here. It applies to every one of us to some degree.

**II Corinthians 4:6-7** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. [He is going back to a beginning, and that beginning is God calling us] But [here is a really humbling statement, something all of us need to meditate on:] we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are so weak, and yet it is *us* He wants. Now verse 8—this follows right after this introduction of our receiving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:

**II Corinthians 4:8-11** We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

This is what Christ and the Father are working toward. That always we are manifesting the life of Jesus Christ in our life.

Back to Hebrews 12 once again:

**Hebrews 12:11-13** Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed.

When I read these verses, do you know what I think Paul is doing? It is like he is now giving them a pep talk like a football coach would give at half time: “Look you’re down 30 points, but the game isn’t over yet! Let’s get with it. Let’s do the tackling, blocking, passing, catching, and do what we’ve been trained to do.” That is what Paul is saying here, because these people were getting discouraged having to face the kind of world that they were living in.

Brethren, it is not at all unthinkable for us to become so weighted down with the way this world is; everything seems to be going wrong in terms of what we experienced in our younger days here in the United States of America. It is getting to be a heavy burden for us, because we know it is not ever going to get better until Christ returns. It is going to continue to get worse.

We cannot only persevere through this, because God has ruled it so, we can *grow* through this. He is allowing these things, these circumstances, to be part of our preparation for the Kingdom of God.

So He goes on. I mentioned all these things about blocking and tackling. Well, here is what we are supposed to do.

**Hebrews 12:12-14** Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

There is the Coach's instruction; there is our Captain's instruction: pursue peace with all men. This even means our enemies. Pursue holiness besides that. Pursuing peace all by itself will require an entire sermon. I think Martin touched on this fairly strongly last week ("Facing Times of Stress: Faithfulness"). But, remember this: the peacemakers will inherit the earth. That is to be our destination: the inheritance of the earth. The people on the earth (it says very plainly several times in God's Word), the way of peace they know not. How does one pursue peace? It is a difficult path. But understanding the principles is easy. Obeying God's instruction is pursuing peace.

Everything that God tells us to do—the end result should be peace, eventually. How do I know this? Because it is sin that causes all the trouble. It was the sin of Adam and Eve that started everything in this direction. And the rest of mankind has just continued to do the kinds of things that Adam and Eve did. The only result from that is chaos. That is what sin does.

So at this present time God is calling upon you and me to reverse the process in our life. This does not mean that we will have great success in doing it in our particular environment, but it is God telling us that this is what we are to do regardless of what we think it is producing in our environment. Eventually it *will* produce, because we will be in the Kingdom of God ruling under Jesus Christ, and peace will descend over the entire earth as the rulers begin to show the way to peace to others. We know it by experience. So God

is training us in a chaotic situation to pursue the way of peace in spite of the way the world is going.

Peace and holiness are actually two sides of the same coin. Pursuing holiness is also a full-time operation, and it is seeking peace. So holiness is not a state of perfection already attained; with Christ in us, it is a process of reflecting God's virtues in every aspect of life. To do this, we must do everything in our power to obtain it.

From this point, we are going to go back to where we left off in the previous sermon and what I just gave you as an introduction to this sermon is an addendum to much of what I gave you regarding holiness in the previous sermon. This seeking of holiness is no game with God! It is very important for us to get *prepared* for the Kingdom of God. Holiness is nothing more than reflecting the way God is.

Where we left off in the previous sermon as we were developing the organization and so forth—the history of the priesthood under the Old Covenant—I want you to recall that we saw a great number of restrictions that the priests had imposed upon them in order to maintain ceremonial holiness.

So recall that some of the things that rendered them ceremonial unclean remained until they were rendered ceremonially clean by a process they had to go through. Recall, also, that God listed a pretty good number of bodily deformities that rendered them unfit for being a priest.

The point here is that every aspect of the ceremonies had to be holy, whether it was the priest, the altar, the offerings, the laver, the candelabra, the incense altar, the mercy seat, the tabernacle, or the temple itself. Each of them, brethren, (and here is why they had to be this way) in some way portray some aspect of the work of Jesus Christ. Brethren, He was holy.

So these things had to reflect that holiness, and that is why the priesthood had to reflect the holiness. From this, you ought to get the impression (and this is the impression that God intends and I intend), that the priesthood was a highly responsible position, as is our calling.

I hope you can begin to appreciate that because of this honor, the priest's life was hedged in with all sorts of restrictions that were designed to help him maintain his state of holiness with God. Brethren, so is our life hedged by all kinds of restrictions.

We are not going to focus so much on the restrictions right now. But, let us go back to the book of Numbers because when we left off, this is one of the next things that took place. Something very bad was going on in Numbers 25. I will not go into the whole background. But, it says that those who died in the plague were 24,000 people. Talk about a population reduction. Wow! 24,000 in one day.

**Numbers 25:10-13** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:  
“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with my zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace [because of what Phinehas did, he made peace]; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”

Now what occurred of course what that the Israelites were attracted by the woman of Moab, attracted by the trap set up for them by Balak and Balaam. Balak was the king, and Balaam was the false prophet. He said he had a way to turn Israel aside, “Tempt them with your woman.” And the Israelites fell for it.

The first thing you know a plague started hitting the camp as God began killing people off. They were sinning; and the wages of sin is death. Phinehas went out there with his spear—Phinehas was a priest—and he burst in on two people who were openly committing adultery or fornication, and he stabbed them both through with one spear, killing them both.

Now that made peace with God because when that occurred everybody was so shocked, and everybody stopped what they were doing, because this priest did what he did. God rewarded him with an everlasting priesthood.

I have no doubt that God had already marked Phinehas for this honor, but what he did most certainly confirmed to God that His choice of this man was correct. I want you to think what a contrast that there is between Phinehas' zeal and the casual wickedness of his uncles, Nadab and Abihu. Did you know there was that relationship? They were his uncles.

It also tends to show something. This is kind of an aside. But what Phinehas did provided atonement that covered the sins of all those people there. It showed that it is not just soldiers who can do something courageous; even the priests can do something courageous.

Now there is something to learn from that. The priests are not intended by God to be merely religious functionaries. Phinehas' zeal and his actions in defending God's honor in this provided the atonement that, as we say, shut off God's anger and withheld Him from blasting Israel out of existence.

Now as far as the record shows—the Biblical record—all high priests from that time on were descended from Eleazar, at least until David's reorganization of the priesthood.

I want you to see something interesting in I Chronicles. This is talking about David:

**I Chronicles 23:2-3** And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel, with the priest and the Levites. The Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and above; and the number of individual males was thirty-eight thousand.

Let me back up just a bit. Phinehas was a son of Eleazar. Eleazar was the son of Aaron. Eleazar was one of those men who was not a firstborn, but he was elevated to the position of a firstborn by appointment when Nadab and Abihu were executed. So he was first in line after those two did what they did and God executed those two.

**I Chronicles 24:2** And Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests.

Eleazar then died and Phinehas was made high priest. Now, Phinehas' appointment as high priest eliminated the Ithamarites from the office; but they were still qualified to be regular priests, because they, too, were descendants of Aaron.

But, when David reorganized the priest into twenty-four courses, he appointed Eleazar's family a double portion—that is sixteen courses on the basis of a firstborn's position. This has impact later on—much later on—in the New Testament. Not this particular one, but it is part of a principle that is shown in the Bible of the meaning of firstborn changing ever so slightly to indicate prominence within a family, or within a group even while they may not necessarily be firstborn.

Eleazar was not firstborn, but he was appointed as firstborn. Ephraim was not firstborn, but he was appointed as firstborn. Joseph was not firstborn, but he was appointed as firstborn.

This continues right on through the Scriptures until we get into the New Testament, and this new assignment of the meaning and usage of firstborn simply means one appointed that authority and position—not literally firstborn.

This is one of the places that we run into that. So when David reorganized things into twenty-four courses to carry the priesthood all the way through a year, sixteen of those courses went to the firstborn son, Eleazar, and eight of them went to Ithamar and his descendants. So there is a two to one ratio there.

There is an interesting thing that occurred just a little bit later. How many of you are familiar with Eli? Eli was one of the judges. He was also a priest. He was also a descendant of Ithamar. Now he could not be high priest, but he had enough on the ball that God appointed him as a judge—which was a very high position. He was not high priest, but he had a very high position. As a priest, he was also judge over all Israel—a very highly responsible position.

But, if you remember, he did not train his children very well. When his children were adults, they were taking advantage of their positions as priests

and treating it like modern day politicians. So what did God do? Here was this very famous man—Eli—with a very high position. He was 98 years old, and he suddenly fell over dead—kind of the opposite side of Phinehas. This all happens within a few chapters of one another on God's record. So there are bad things that happen within the priesthood as well.

The priests under the Old Covenant at the tabernacle and the temple were surrounded by symbols of the character and attributes that a priest must have in order to rightly conduct himself within the office assigned to him by his calling. Some of these appear in the consecration ceremonies when they were ordained to office. A second grouping of symbols appears in the clothing and the adornments that they were required to wear. A third grouping is in the tabernacle and temple furniture that Richard is describing in his sermons ["Approaching God Through Christ"]. A fourth grouping is in the sacrifices and ceremonies they perform as part of their work.

Understanding this symbolism is very important because of our calling to our office within the body of Jesus Christ. These offices must be filled by His children with the kind of character and attributes God required of the Israelites, but which they were unable to give Him. But, *we are expected to give Him*, because we are functioning by His Spirit. Therefore, to whom much is given, from him much is required. Thus it becomes important to us to understand the symbolism that surrounded the priesthood under the Old Covenant, so we can pick up more detailed information on what God requires of us.

Now first on this list is that there must be a divine appointment to the office. We are going to turn to Exodus 28. God says:

**Exodus 28:1** Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

This was their calling to the office. We are going to turn to the New Testament for a little while—first of all to Hebrews 5. I mentioned to you earlier that there is a great deal about priesthood in the book of Hebrews.

**Hebrews 5:1-6, 10** For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” . . . called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Christ, too, was called by God into the order of Melchizedek to operate as High Priest. Christ did not assume the office on His own. Besides He was not of the family of Levi. He was a Jew. So here we have a major change in the priesthood that God is establishing under Jesus Christ and calling it of the order of Melchizedek. This is what we are being called into and trained for. We are to be kings and priests; and our priesthood is part of the Melchizedek priesthood; and our High Priest, our Boss, our Leader, the Captain of our salvation is Jesus Christ.

We are also called.

**Ephesians 4:1-3** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I want you to go from here to II Thessalonians 2. We have a somewhat parallel scripture here. Paul writes to the Thessalonians:

**II Thessalonians 2:13-15** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel,

for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

So again Paul mentions that we have been called to a specific responsibility. Now what I want you to notice first is that we are not called to be innovators. Nadab and Abihu were innovators and they were executed. God tells us that we are neither to take from nor add to His Word.

We talked earlier about the way of peace—pursuing peace. Pursuing peace is done by doing what God says. That might seem difficult, that might seem painful, but it is the way of peace and God does not want us innovating on our own. He has specific reasons for why He has these requirements for you and me.

Instead, as we saw in II Thessalonians especially, we are called to stand fast and walk worthy of what we have been called to. The priesthood is a very, very high responsibility as we will eventually get to. It is an honor to have been called to this responsibility. I mean *honor* to be called to it.

Now holiness is produced and maintained by sticking as close as possible to the trunk of the tree of God's instruction. These two sections—Ephesians 4 and II Thessalonians 2—are emphasizing unity. One cannot be holy without unity with God, because holiness is derived from unity with God. If we deviate from God's instruction, we are sinning. We are not going toward holiness. So holiness is maintained by sticking as close as we can to the trunk of the tree.

Thus, the first way that a priest promotes the unity of the brethren is for himself to be in unity with God. That is the way unity is formed. The Father and Son are one; they are not separated from one another; they are not bickering with one another; they are in agreement with one another.

So if we are going to be promoters of unity, this unity has to flow from the Father, through the Son, through the priesthood, and out to those the priesthood is serving. Now in our case, this priesthood is serving each other primarily.

In one sense it is really a tight group that God is putting together—all knit together there. This is not a superficial unity that one finds at a social or athletic event. This unity is driven by *love*. That is the purpose of being a blessing to God and one another so that the church can be built up. This love again, like the unity, is derived from the relationship with God.

Everything that the individual priest is increased in comes from the Father through the Son to the individual. So if we are going to do our job well, it is going to be done because our relationship with the Father and Son is good. That is where it all begins.

So the priest's responsibility is to promote conduct among the brethren that is in harmony with the responsibilities of our relationship with God. Paul mentions humility, meekness, patience, forbearing with one another in love. This kind of conduct will work to produce holiness, because this quality of unity is like the glue, the bond—in fact this is what Paul calls it in Colossians 3—that hold things together, because the love for God and the brethren is motivating the priest's conduct.

II Thessalonians 2:13 fits hand in glove with Ephesians 4:1-3 by reminding us of our high calling. The word “traditions” in verse 15 (II Thessalonians 2:15) should be understood to include the entire package of doctrines that Paul taught them. We are not talking about the Jews traditions. We are talking about the church of God's traditions.

If the church of God's traditions are right, every one of them ought to be found in the Word of God (somewhere there) and be rooted in it. So Paul tells us to hold fast to all of them. This gives us a fairly good, basic understanding of why holiness is required and how it is acquired: *by living as God says within a relationship with Him and the brethren*. Brethren, that relationship is everything. It is salvation; it is eternal life. I can say this on the authority of Jesus Christ, because that is what He says in John 17:3: “Eternal life is to know God.” Eternal life is to have an intimate relationship with God. Eternal life is a way of life that is learned by mimicking God in human affairs.

This is why there is so much about holiness in regard to the priests. Everything hangs on that as we pursue it and pursue peace. Following that appointment:

**Exodus 29:4** And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.

Now this is something that I think that we are fairly familiar with, not particularly the priests getting washed with water, but the washing of water for us. This requirement for the priest was only for them. It does not apply directly to you and me, because we go through a much vaster washing—this was just a physical washing.

Our spiritual washing is accomplished by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, in His blood, and also within our relationship with Christ; because we do not get washed only one time, spiritually our washing ought to be taking place every day, as we shall see in a little bit.

That washing that we just read of in Exodus 29 was part of their consecration ceremony. That of course was very important to them. As we are learning from what Richard is giving, there was a small measure of washing every single day for them, too. It should be the same for us, only a far great magnitude.

Now we are going to go back to the New Testament, to the book of John. If you know what John 13 is about, you know it about the Passover. We are only going to read verses 6-10 to make a connection with a particular word.

**John 13: 6-9** Then He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him, “Lord are You washing my feet?” Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this [understand it, get it, comprehend it].” Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me. Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”

I do not believe he was being flippant there at all. He was realizing the seriousness. He may not have understood it, but he knew enough about Jesus to know that He did not do flippant or unnecessary things. And now he understood that this was a very necessary thing for him to go through and he wanted to go all the way. Good for him. There was zeal there—a little bit misdirected, but nonetheless it was zeal that was driving him.

**John 13:10** Jesus said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

Now you know the “not all of you” refers to Judas. Go forward two more chapters to John 15. Here we have a very significant revelation:

**John 15:3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

This is one of the reasons why I said we need to be cleansed every day. We need to be studying God’s Word. God’s Word is a cleansing agent if we are taking it seriously and following through with what God says we are to do.

Let us go to Psalm 119. I just want to pick up one thing. The psalmist asks:

**Psalm 119:9** How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

We have been listening to the word of man since we were born. It impacts on us daily through radio, through television, through advertising. We read books. We talk to our employees, we talk to our employers—all the time we are hearing things on a human level. But God says, “If you want to get cleaned up, pay attention to My word.” There is a big difference between the two, because His word is truth. How much of what man tells us is truth? Can we bet our life on it? Maybe, on occasion. But, it is not true like God’s Word is. God’s Word is *always* true. The Word of God cleanses.

Let us go back to Ephesians, still on the same general subject. We will put another nail in this.

**Ephesians 5:25-26** Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her [Why did He give Himself for it?], that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

Christ's death and Christ's faith in us opens the door to having our entire life cleansed spiritually, because we begin to take advice, counsel, command, suggestions, or whatever from God, and it starts cleaning us up.

Let us apply this again to our calling. Our calling includes being priests. Everything that we have just read in this one section about cleansing speaks of preparation for executing the office we are called to.

What good is a priest who does not know the Word of God? What good is a priest who is not putting into practice the Word of God in his own life? What good is a priest who is not overcoming and growing and whose way of life and attitudes are not being cleansed because of his contact with God's Word and belief in it?

There is a saying that every one of us here knows: "Cleanliness is next to godliness." But spiritual cleanliness comes from contact with God's Word. It is what washes our minds.

In another place, Jesus directly connects words to spirit. Hang onto that one too. He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The Word of God is absolutely essential to the life and the work of a priest. So it is very important for a priest to be studying God's Word and to be putting it into practice.

All of these factors work together to produce holiness. That holiness is necessary for functioning within the office that we are called to. Here is another interesting part of the consecration to the office. Let us go back to the book of Exodus again.

**Exodus 29:19-20** You shall also take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram. Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.

Now that sounds crazy. “Hey, Aaron, where did you get that red ear?” Well, actually, it has very serious symbolic ramifications. We are going to go to the book of Judges. The man speaking here is not a holy man at all. It just gives us a little bit of insight into some part of this ceremony.

**Judges 1:6-7** Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toe [both big toes]. And Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me [Whatever you sow, you reap. Adoni-Bezek got his thumbs cut off and his big toes cut off by the Israelites.]. Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

What happens when you cut off a person’s thumbs? It virtually incapacitates the hands so that one has a difficult time grasping things. It is the opposable thumbs that enable us to have a great deal of strength in our hands. You take away the thumbs and that strength is diminished tremendously. You can do a little bit, but you cannot do very much.

What happens when you cut off the big toe? It virtually incapacitates the foot. It does not stop them from being able to walk somewhat, but boy they would not be able to fight in a battle as a soldier. They would be hopelessly at the mercy of anybody who had all of their foot and all of their hands to continue fighting.

So this was done in those days in order to incapacitate an enemy that you did not feel was exactly deserving at that particular time, but it was a very humbling thing.

We did not notice anything about the ear at this point in time. We will get back to the thumb and the toe in just a little bit. But, he did put the blood on

the ear as well. Let me tell you, I began to think about this when I heard Garner Ted say one day (30 or 40 years ago), “If somebody asked me, ‘Would you rather be blinded or would you rather be made deaf?’” He said, “I would choose being blinded.”

I wondered about that. But, in a way, spiritually it is a right choice. Where does faith come from? It comes by hearing. This does not mean that we cannot hear from the eye, because we can still hear mentally. But, when a person cannot hear, they are really incapacitated in terms of learning.

Let us go to II Corinthians 5 to a very familiar scripture.

**II Corinthians 5:7** For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Idol worshippers are people who believe their eyes and thus live by sight. But Romans 10:17 shows that true worshippers live by hearing God’s Word and thus by faith. Seeing something, in regard to faith, is not nearly as important as what we hear.

Now the ear of the high priest is anointed so the priest might be truly attuned to God’s Word and the appeals of the people. His ears are tuned into really listening and discerning, so that he can get to the heart of a matter and be able to rightly counsel people because he hears beyond the mere words; and because he has been listening to God, he has discernment, and he has God’s Word with which to counsel.

The ear is very important to a priest, and God emphasized this by consecrating the ear, by anointing it with the blood, and just reminding the priest forever to not forget the importance of listening to people.

Later on in this series we will get back to Hebrews 5:1-6 where it says that the priest has to be able to give goodly counsel, kind counsel, etcetera, to hear the complaints of the weak and to counsel them rightly. So God signifies this by having the ear anointed.

Now it is very likely that anointing the thumb was a reference to make sure that you are handling your responsibilities the way a priest needs to handle them, in a consecrated way. Remember they always had to handle the sacrifices. They had to handle the furniture in the tabernacle.

Every one of them [sacrifices, furniture, etc.] had to do with characteristics of Jesus Christ. So it was to remind them to always handle things with care, rather than like a klutz. So that fed right into the attitude with which they were to do their job.

What about anointing the toe—the great toe? It was to remind them that they are to be an example before the people and their walk before the people better be upright and holy.

So their walk, the way they did their work, and the way they listened to both God and the people—and so God reminded them by anointing each vital part of their responsibilities that would keep them attuned to carrying out their responsibilities in a holy way.