

THE CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS

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A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“This is the thing that thou shalt do onto them to hallow them,
 to minister unto me in the priest's office.”*
Exodus 29:1

UNDER the law, only one family could serve God in the priest's office, but under the Gospel all the saints are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). In the Christian church no persons whatsoever are set apart to the priesthood above the rest of their brethren, for in us is fulfilled the promise which Israel by reason of her sin failed to obtain—“Ye shall be a kingdom of priests unto me.”

Paul, in addressing all the saints, bids them present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service. It is the grand design of all the works of divine grace, both for us and in us, to fit us for the office of the spiritual priesthood, and it will be the crown of our perfection when with all our brethren we shall sing unto the Lord Jesus the new song, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

This honor have all the saints, according to Peter, in the second chapter of his first epistle, it belongs even to newborn babes in grace, for even such are spoken of as forming part of a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Nor is this confined to men as was the Aaronic priesthood, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.

My subject today is the consecration of priests, but it does not refer exclusively or even specially to persons called clergymen, or ministers, but to all of you who believe in Jesus, for ye are God's clergy, His *cleros*, that is, His inheritance, and ye should be all ministers, ministering according to the grace given to you.

The family of Aaron was *chosen* unto the priesthood, “for no man taketh this honor upon himself, but he that was called thereunto as was Aaron,” and even thus all the Lord's people are chosen from before the foundation of the world. Being chosen, Aaron and his sons were at God's command *brought nigh* unto the door of the tabernacle. None ever come to God except they are brought to Him. Even the spouse sings, “He brought me into the banqueting house.” Jesus said, “No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” We are made nigh by the blood of Jesus and brought nigh by the drawings of the Holy Ghost.

Assuming that you and I have made our calling and election sure, let us further see what is needed to qualify us to serve as priests at the altar of the living God. Follow me carefully as I mention the ceremonies prescribed in the chapter before us, for they teach us necessary things, the outward ceremonies are abolished, but their inner meaning remains.

I. First, THE PRIESTS WERE WASHED.

We read in the fourth verse, “Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.” The pure and holy God cannot be served by men of unclean hands and impure hearts. He would not endure it under the law, nor will He tolerate it under the Gospel. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the LORD,” and “Be ye holy for I am holy,” are standing precepts of our priesthood. It was well said by the psalmist, “I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.”

This washing is afforded us in two ways, answering to our double need. First, it is given to us in *regeneration*, wherein we are born of water and of the Spirit. By the power of the Holy Ghost we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and in us is fulfilled the type set forth in Naaman, who washed in the Jordan, and his flesh came again unto him, even as a little child. Not in the waters of Baptism, but in the living water of the Holy Spirit are we cleansed from nature's original defilement. He it is who causes old things to pass away and makes all things new. Through His sanctifying operations we are cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and made vessels fit for the Master's use.

This washing is in every case essential. You may say, "I desire to serve God," but you cannot do it till first you are born again. Your whole nature must be cleansed, or you will never be qualified to stand as a priest before the thrice holy God.

I marvel how some who know nothing about regeneration can dare call themselves priests. They are strangers to the renewing influences of the Spirit, and yet they style themselves God's ministers. Has God set blind men to be guides and dead men to quicken souls? Unto such as these God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?"

The need of another form of washing was indicated by the double stream which flowed from the pierced breast of Christ, for "forthwith came there out blood and water." We must be washed by *remission of sin*, of which David sang, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

In the first moment of our faith in Jesus there is given to us a washing which makes us clean every whit in the sight of God, once for all. It is that washing to which the Lord Jesus referred when He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, for he is clean." The priests were washed once, from head to foot, to make them ceremonially clean, and after that they needed only to wash their feet when they came into the holy place. And even thus our Lord told His disciples when He washed their feet that they had no need of another complete bathing, for they were clean every whit.

Believers should not pray to their heavenly Father as if their sins still rested upon them and had never been forgiven, for the Lord has put away their sin, and as far as the east is from the west so far hath He removed their transgressions from them. Yet as they continually accumulate some evil and stain by being in this body and in this world, they have need to come each day with, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Our first washing has removed all sin as before God the Judge. Our daily washing cleanses us from offenses towards God as our Father. Even when we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship with one another, we yet need daily cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, and blessed be God we have it.

Now, my dear hearers, have you thus been cleansed from all sin? Do you know today the power of that word, "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"? Have you the blessedness of that man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile? Do not try to stand as a priest before God till you have received this double washing.

Remember the great aim of the Gospel is to make us priests unto God, but the consecrating process must begin by our being cleansed as sinners from the guilt of sin and the defilement of our nature. He who would serve the Lord must first confess his iniquities and obtain remission, or he can no more approach the living God than a leper could enter into the holy place.

II. After being washed THE PRIESTS WERE CLOTHED.

They might not wear one of the garments which belonged to themselves or to their former calling. Undergarments were provided for them and outer garments too, within and without their raiment was new and appropriate. They put on what was given them, nothing more and nothing less. No man can serve God acceptably in his own righteousness, it is but filthy rags. We must have the fine linen of an inward sanctification and the outer garment, for glory and for beauty, of the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must, in a word, sing with the hymn,

*“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”*

We cannot worship God unless it be so, He will drive us from His presence.

Note that *these garments were provided for them*. They were at no expense in buying them, nor labor in weaving them, nor skill in making them. They had simply to put them on. And you, dear child of God, are to put on the garments which Jesus Christ has provided for you at His own cost, and freely bestows upon you out of boundless love.

These garments formed a complete apparel. They had no shoes upon their feet, it is true, but they would have been superfluous, for the place whereon they stood was holy ground. They were sandaled with reverence. The child of God when he is bedecked in the righteousness of Christ still feels a solemn awe of the Lord, and comes into the presence of the Most High with lowest adoration, for he remembers that he is but a creature at his best.

These garments were very comely to look upon. Though the common priests did not wear the breastplate of jewels, nor the bells and pomegranates, nor the girdle of blue and fine twisted linen, yet, in their ordinary dress of pure white, they must have been very comely to look upon. Fine white linen is the emblem of the righteousness of the saints, and truly in God’s eye, with the exception of His dear Son, there are no lovelier objects in the world than His own people when they are dressed in the garments of salvation.

The dress provided was absolutely necessary to be worn. No priest might offer sacrifice without the appointed garments, for we read in the forty-third verse of the twenty-eighth chapter, “They shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die.”

They would have died had they attempted to sacrifice without being clothed according to the law. A man pretending to serve God without the divine righteousness upon him, puts himself in a most perilous position. He is where the flaming wrath of God burns terribly. Better for him to keep his own place in the distance, than to draw near unto the service of God, unless he is adorned with the glorious array which Christ has woven in the loom of His life and dyed in His own blood.

Dear brethren, if you desire to worship God aright in holy labor, or prayer, or praise, you must go to your engagements dressed in the righteousness of Jesus, for you can only be “accepted in the Beloved.”

III. Then, thirdly, THESE PRIESTS WERE ANOINTED.

It does not appear that they were each one *personally* anointed so early in the ceremony, but they saw the fragrant oil poured upon Aaron on their behalf. So you find it written in the seventh verse, “Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.” So that in order to serve God aright, it is needful for us to see the anointing which has been given to our covenant Head, without measure.

But you say to me, “Of what benefit can that be to us? We require the unction of the Holy Spirit upon ourselves.” True, but the oil which was poured upon Aaron’s head went down his beard, and its copious flow descended even to the skirts of his garments. And what you need to know if you are to be a true priest to God is, that the Holy Spirit comes to you through Christ and from Christ, and that it is because your Head is anointed that you have an unction from the Holy One.

You could not have been Christians if He had not first been the Christ. Be of good cheer concerning this, for though you may be one of the lowest members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, you have an anointing from the Holy One, because Jesus has that anointing, and in the power of that anointing you may minister before the Lord.

Further on in the discourse we shall have to show you the personal anointing which you must individually receive, but it is highly important for every worker to see where his fragrance before God must lie—never in himself, but always in his covenant Head. Be ye filled with the Spirit, but do not dream that the Spirit of God comes to you apart from your Lord. You are the branch, and the sap can

only come to you through the stem. You are the member, and your life dwells in your Head, divided from Jesus you are dead. Never forget this, for any attempt at independence will be fatal. A man in Christ is fragrant with a holy perfume before the Lord, but out of Christ he is an unclean thing, and cannot approach the altar.

IV. Fourthly, having been washed, clothed, and representatively anointed, they had next TO SHARE IN THE SIN OFFERING.

They were sinful men, how could they approach a thrice holy God? You and I are sinful, as we know by bitter experience. How can we hope to stand before the mercy seat, and present acceptable sacrifices unto such a one as God is? There is no way of approaching Him while our sin is seen, it must be covered, covered by a sin offering.

We are told that the sin offering selected was a bullock without blemish, of the first year, strong, and vigorous, a perfect being as far as it could be. Lift your eyes to Jesus, in whom is no spot of sin, being undefiled in nature and immaculate in life. He it is who stands for you, even He who knew no sin, and yet was made sin for you that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He, in the fullness of His strength, and in the perfection of His manhood, gave Himself as a ransom and a substitute for you. View Him with wondering gratitude.

The bullock of the sin offering being brought to the altar, Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands upon it. Read the tenth verse—They “shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.” The Hebrew word means more than lightly placing the hand, it gives the idea of pressing hard upon the bullock’s head. They came each one and leaned upon the victim, loading him with their burden, signifying their acceptance of its substitution, their joy that the Lord would accept that victim in their stead.

When they put their hands on the bullock, they made a confession of sin, and the Rabbis have preserved for us the form in which that confession was made, but time forbids our reading it to you. The act was evidently understood by all concerned as a typical transfer of guilt, and the placing of the bullock as the sin offering in the place of the sinner.

Come, brethren and sisters, though washed, though clothed, though anointed, come as penitents, and rejoice in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus. Draw nigh unto the Lord with sincere hearts and acknowledge your transgressions, and again accept your Savior as your sin-bearer, for a sin-bearer who is not accepted by you can be of no service to you. The hands of faith must be laid upon the sacrifice. For my part, I like to lay them there every day, nay, I desire to keep them there always, believing without ceasing that my sin is imputed no more to me, but by a sacred act of God was laid upon Jesus, according to that sentence, “He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The bullock was killed as a token that just as the poor beast was slain so they deserved to die for their sins, and that done, the blood was caught in bowls and taken to the altar, and there it was poured out, at the bottom of the altar, round about. Read the seventeenth verse. There must have been a pool of blood all round the altar, or at any rate a crimsoned line. What did it signify? Did it not show that our only access to God is by the blood? They were washed and robed and anointed, and yet they could not reach the altar till the way to it had been paved with atoning blood.

Oh, my brother, there is no way for you to God as His priest except through the precious blood. We cannot draw near to God, or serve Him aright, if we forget the blood of atonement. Our standing is upon and within the blood of sprinkling. We must bring our prayers, praises, preaching, almsgiving, and all other offerings, to the altar, around which the blood is poured. In vain are all good works which are not so presented. See ye well to this, my brethren. It is essential beyond all else.

This done, the choicer and more vital parts of the bullock were taken and burned upon the altar, to show that even when our Lord Jesus is viewed as a sin offering, He is still a sweet savor unto God, and however He might hide His face from His Son because of our sin, yet He was always in Himself well-pleasing unto the Father. Hence the inwards of the bullock were burned on the altar, where nothing could be presented but that which was a sweet savor to God. O Thou Lamb of God, under whatever

aspect we behold Thee, Thou art still precious to Thy Father! Thou wert beloved by Him even when Thou hadst to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!”

But because the bullock was a sin offering, and therefore obnoxious to God, its flesh, and its skin, and all that remained were carried outside the camp, and burned with a quick, consuming fire, as a thing worthy to be destroyed, for sin was upon it and it must be burned up.

Believer, have you seen Jesus as the great offering for sin, made a curse for us? You will never serve God in the priestly office aright unless you see that sin is a hateful thing to God, so hateful that even when it only lay upon His dear Son by imputation, He could not look upon Him, but bruised and smote Him until He cried in anguish, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.”

“Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the camp,” to show that not without His being treated as a transgressor could we be treated as righteous, and also that sin is in itself a deadly pest, which must not be endured in the camp of the chosen. Never let your joy concerning the atonement lessen your horror of transgression—

*“With your joy for pardoned guilt,
Mourn that you pierced the Lord.”*

I am persuaded that no one will ever serve the Lord humbly and devotedly unless he obtains a clear view of the Lord Jesus as his sin offering and substitute. Some preachers either do not know that truth, or else they think too little of it to make it prominent in their sermons, hence their ministry does not save souls. The great saving truth is the doctrine of atonement by substitution. Without it ministers will keep souls in bondage year after year because they do not proclaim the finished redemption, nor let men know that sin was laid on Jesus that it might be forever removed from the believer.

“He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Brethren, get that truth clearly into your heads, and intensely into your hearts, and you will become devoted to the Lord. Do not only believe that grand truth, but to the spirit of it serve ye the Lord without weariness, seeing ye have been redeemed with a price far more precious than silver and gold.

V. After the sin offering the consecrated ones went on to TAKE THEIR SHARE IN THE BURNT OFFERING.

The burnt offering differed widely from the sin offering. The sin offering indicated Christ as bearing our sin, but the burnt offering sets Him forth as presenting an acceptable offering unto the Lord. God required of us perfect obedience, He demanded from us a pure and holy life, and the requirement was a just one. But among us all there is none righteous, no, not one. How then could we stand before the thrice Holy Lord?

Beloved, Jesus stands in the gap. Before God His righteousness was perfect, acceptable, and delightful, and for us it is presented. He is made of God unto us righteousness. The burnt offering does not bring to light the remembrance of sin except so far as it reminds us that we were in need of a perfect righteousness. It brings before us only the thought of Jesus offering Himself as a sweet savor unto God, and making us accepted in the Beloved.

The priests were to bring a ram without blemish, and when killed, before it was laid on the altar, its innards were to be washed, for otherwise the natural foulness of its body would prevent its being a fit type of that Savior who is pure within, in whom there is no taint of original sin. When this ram was brought the priests were to lay their hands upon it, as much as to say, “We accept this ram, that it may represent us as acceptable before God.”

Oh, beloved, lay your hands on Jesus now by faith, and say, “Jesus, I accept Thee as my righteousness before the Lord, and believe that as God sees in Thee all that is delightful, and smells a sweet savor of rest, so He will be well pleased with me for Thy sake.”

This offering, when placed upon the altar was wholly burnt. Not a fragment of it was put outside the camp, not a morsel of it was eaten by man, but the whole ram was utterly consumed with fire, for it was

a burnt offering unto the Lord. And thus, dear friends, it is very delightful to us to see that God received Jesus, the whole of Jesus, there was nothing in Him to reject, and nothing that could be done without. He satisfied the Lord. He asked no more, He would have no less. Jesus has rendered to the Father all that He could desire from men, and the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake.

A sense of acceptance is a very necessary thing to those who would worship God aright, for if you do not enjoy it the legal spirit will begin to work to win acceptance by merit, and that will spoil it all. If men dream that they are to pray or preach their way to heaven, or to do this, and to do that, to be acceptable with God, they will offer strange fire on the Lord's altar and bring sacrifices with which He can never be pleased. Vain oblations He will call them, and frown on the offerers.

How delightful it is to serve God with a sense that we are pleasant in the sight of God, for this fills us with gratitude, inspires us with zeal, creates boldness, and fosters every grace. With what joy will you stand to minister daily whatever your calling may be, whether it be as a mother in the family, a servant in the house, a minister in the pulpit, or a teacher in the class. You will not need driving like a slave to his toil, but like a dearly beloved child you will rejoice to please your Father in all things.

Work in the prison house of the law under the lash of conscience is a very different thing from holy work in the sunlight of the Lord's countenance and the liberty of full acceptance. He who knows that he is not now to be judged and condemned by the law, but stands forever justified because of what Christ has done for him, serves his God with a holy alacrity unknown to others.

VI. After the priests had seen for themselves the sin offering and the burnt offering, it was needful that they should partake of a third sacrifice, which was a PEACE OFFERING.

Another ram was brought as unblemished and vigorous as the former, for Jesus is never to be typified by anything but the best of its kind. We are told in the nineteenth verse that Aaron and his sons were to put their hands upon it, for, whatever view of the great sacrifice they might gaze upon, it was imperatively necessary that they should have a personal interest in it. Mere theory will never do, we must have personal acquaintance with the Lord, and we must have Him to be our own.

So long as we have no part or lot in Jesus we are as much excluded from the service of the Lord as were the uncircumcised and the unclean. No man can run the heavenly race unless he is looking unto Jesus, he cannot be a soldier of the Lord unless he has Christ for his Captain, he cannot feed others until he has himself fed on Jesus, nor bring others to Jesus till he has come himself. "The husbandman that laboureth must first be partaker of the fruits." This is one of the laws of spiritual husbandry and cannot be set aside. Lay your hand upon the head of the substitute before you venture to lay it upon the work of the Lord.

When this was done, the peace offering was slain. A sin offering was a thing obnoxious to God, and represented expiation made for sin, a burnt offering was a sweet savor unto God and it was all burned on the altar, all being for the Lord alone—thus representing the Lord Jesus as rendering to the Lord a complete obedience, which magnified the law and made it honorable. But the peace offering was shared between the Lord and the priest or offerer.

The Lord's part was consumed with fire upon the altar, and another portion was eaten by man in the holy place. The peace offering was thus an open declaration of the communion which had been established between God and man, so that they ate together, rejoicing in the same offering.

Beloved brethren, when you have felt the sweets of seeing the Lord as a sin offering, and then have tasted the high joys of acceptance as you have gazed upon Him as the burnt offering, satisfying JEHOVAH's heart, it is surpassingly delightful to behold the Lamb of God as our peace offering, making glad the heart of God and man, and bringing both in bonds of friendship to a common meeting place. The eternal Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we cry, "This is our beloved Lord, in whom our inmost soul rejoices."

In the peace offering the communion between the priests and the Lord commenced outwardly by their being consecrated by the blood of the peace offering. Moses dipped his finger in the blood and smeared first the priest's right ear, then his thumb, and then his toe. As Matthew Henry says, as if they

marked the boundaries and extremities of man's being, to show that all that was enclosed within the crimson lines was consecrated unto the Lord. We go not too far when we add that it signified the dedication of each faculty. The ear was henceforth to hear God's commands, to listen to divine teaching, and to drink in divine promises, and no more to regard falsehood, vanity, and vice.

The hand was now henceforth to be engaged in the divine service with diligence and intelligence, for the right hand was thus marked, and the thumb, the most useful part of it, for holy work the hand must be reserved.

The feet were to be equally holy, the priest, wherever he stood, or walked, or ran, was to be "holiness unto the LORD." He had no right to go anywhere if that blood-marked foot would be out of place. The whole man was thus consecrated by the blood of the everlasting covenant, a solemn seal indeed! Our personal share of the blood of Jesus has already done this for us, it has constrained us to yield unto God our whole manhood, spirit, soul, and body.

My brother, you can never serve God as His priest unless you are wholly given up to God through the blood of Jesus. You must have this verse in your very soul, and must masticate it, digest it, assimilate it into your nature—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are his." This surrender of yourself unto the Lord commences your communion with the Lord, the peace offering has begun.

The next thing was to sprinkle the priests all over with a mixture of oil and blood, and this is that anointing which I said we should see by and by. "Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him."

Yes, brethren, we need to know that double anointing, the blood of Jesus which cleanses, and the oil of the Holy Spirit which perfumes us. It is well to see how these two blend in one, Jesus and His atonement, the Spirit and His sanctification, the world for us and the work in us. Read the third of John, and there you find, "Ye must be born again." But side by side with it you get, "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned."

It is not so easy for the preacher to always give these two doctrines with equal clearness and distinctness. He is very apt, when he is preaching up simple faith and saying, "Only believe," to forget that equally important statement, "Ye must be born again." It is a terrible blunder to set the blood and the oil in opposition, they must always go together. Yet there are some who have even spoken depreciatingly of repentance, which is an essential part of the work of the Spirit of God. Their zeal for holding up the righteousness of Christ by faith has driven them beyond the bounds of truth.

Brethren, do not err in this matter, but abide in equal loyalty to these equally sure and important verities. If you would serve the Lord aright, you must have the blood and the oil sprinkled upon you, that is to say, you must know personally the influence of them both.

What a strange sight these men in white garments must have presented, bespattered all over with blood and oil. Did that stain their garments? No, it adorned and perfumed them. Remember that saying, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." No purity is comparable to that which comes by the Spirit and by the atoning blood, in God's sight these priests thus stained were more beautiful by far than they had been before.

Oh, my soul, prize Jesus and His blood, and never forget that you need the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Bless God for justification, but seek after sanctification. Praise Him for perfection in Christ Jesus, and go on to obtain the perfect work of the Holy Ghost. We have a cleansing and we also have an unction from the Holy One, as our experience is, so let our teaching be, for the priests' garments taught the people. We are to go forth as priests, and declare the virtue of the atoning sacrifice, but we must also manifest the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

The next part of the ceremony was very singular. The priests had their hands filled. Certain parts of the ram were taken, and "one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket

of unleavened bread, which is before the LORD,” and all these were put into the hands of Aaron and his sons, so that they stood with their hands full before the Lord. See the beauty of this and pray for a complete realization of it yourself. The Lord intends to make you a priest, but your hands are full of sin. What have you to do? You must lay those guilty hands on the sin offering, and make confession, and exercise faith, then the sin is gone, being transferred to another, and your hands are empty.

What next? Will the Lord leave you empty-handed? No, He gives you something to offer. He allows you a part of the peace offering to fill your hands withal, and this you present before Him as a wave offering.

It is a blessed thing to stand before God with your hands full of Christ. The service which consists in holding forth Jesus is most blessed. I love preaching when I have to preach Jesus only. Then I come before you, not empty-handed, but loaded with meat and bread for you. How idle it is for us to stand before God with nothing to offer, and if we have not Jesus we have nothing, or worse than nothing.

We may also interpret the full hands of the priests as representing our being enriched with the truth of God. I believe it used to be a ceremony in the English Church that, when the bishop ordained a minister, he always placed the Bible in his hands, to set forth what he was expected to deal out to the people. When the Lord ordains His people to be priests unto Him He puts the Bible into their hands, and fills their heads and hearts with the truth thereof.

When you have the inspired Word in your hands, you have both meat for strong men and bread for children. You have all sorts of spiritual food for all sorts of persons, and you need not fear that they will turn away dissatisfied, they cannot need more to feed upon than the bread of God’s altar and the flesh of God’s peace offering.

When their hands were full, and they stood at the altar, it indicated the way in which they brought to the Lord all that they had. We cannot act as priests before God with empty hands. “None of you shall appear before me empty,” is His command. Has He given us wealth? Let us give without grudging, devising liberal things. Never neglect weekly storing and weekly offering, these are fit parts of Sabbath worship. Have we time, talent, influence, let us consecrate them all and come with those possessions which Jesus has lent us, and present them with the flesh of the peace offering and the sacred oil.

Holding this in their hands, the priests had to wave their pleasant burden to and fro. I scarcely know why, except that you who are God’s priests have not had your hands filled that you may stand still. But that you may move them to and fro in the earth, that east, west, north, and south may know the benefit thereof, and that your brethren on either hand may commune with you in your ministering.

Every now and then the priests stopped the horizontal motion, and heaved or lifted up their offering, as if to say, “It is all for Thee, O JEHOVAH. We lift it up into the presence of Thine august Majesty, for it is Thine, and we are about to lay it on Thine altar.” Believers, if you have had your hands filled by God, you must not be idle. Your fullness is meant for distribution to God’s glory.

If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth. If the rivers be full of water they run into the sea, and if God gives you a fullness, it is that you may communicate it to others and devote it to Himself. Jesus Christ breaks the bread, multiplies it, and gives it to the disciples to divide among the multitude. Nary a man becomes empty handed because he does not know the art of distribution. He has his hands full and cries out, “Where shall I bestow my goods? my hands are full and I would keep it for myself and my family.” My brother, wave it among your neighbors, lift it up to God in solemn consecration, and then let it be laid upon God’s altar, since for this purpose you were called to be a priest unto the Most High.

Last of all there followed a very pleasant part of the matter—they sat down and feasted. God had received His part in the burning of the victim on the altar, and now Aaron and his sons were to “eat those things wherewith the atonement was made.” You cannot serve God without strength. You cannot have strength except you eat, and you must be careful what you take into your soul, for according to what your food is will your strength be.

The Lord would have His people fed daily upon Christ, and fed in the holy place where they serve. Christ is delightful to God and is delightful to you, and you must feed on Him in communion with God, in the place of holy fellowship. There is no sustenance for our inner nature anywhere but in Jesus, but blessed be His name, no other sustenance can be desired, for He fills us to the full and gives us a strength which is equal to our day.

I know some good people who are very busy indeed in the services of God, and I am very delighted that they should be, but I would caution them against working and never eating. They give up attending the means of grace as hearers because they have so much to do as workers. That is very well, and some strong men may be able to do it safely, but I do not think many of us can afford to do without the regular hearing of the Word. Whatever may be our zeal to work like Martha, we must also sit at Jesus' feet like Mary, or we shall become "cumbered with much serving." The priest is to offer sacrifice, but he must have time, also, to feed on the portion allotted to him.

How sweet it is to enjoy the food of God, the flesh of Jesus, the bread of heaven. Aaron and his sons had the breast and the shoulder for their part—the love of Christ's heart and the power of Christ's arm. I am thankful, as one of God's priests, to have the shoulder and breast, for power and love are needful for my comfort and support. Eli's vile sons were wont to drive a three-pronged hook into the cauldron, and bring up what they thought the choicer portions, but my soul is more than content with what the rule of the house allot me, in fact, these are the best parts of the sacrifice.

In closing, I would call the attention of believers for a moment to the fact, that Aaron and his sons received this consecration for life. You will find in the ninth verse the words, "The priests' office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute." "Once a priest, always a priest," is the rule in the priesthood to which we belong.

We abide in Christ, and we also have an anointing which abideth in us, for we have been sealed with "that Holy Spirit of promise." Do not act at any time as if you were not priests. If you profess to be the Lord's do not lie about it, let it be truly so, and that every day, and all the day, and in all things, for He hath made us kings and priests unto God forever. Do not, I beseech you, dishonor your sacred character.

I shall ask two questions in closing. Do you and I offer sacrifice continually? Unto this we are called, according to the apostle, that we should offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise continually. To Him the cherubim continually cry "Holy, holy, holy." Do we every day feel that our whole being is "Holiness unto the Lord"? In the workshop, in the home, at the fireside, in the field, as well as in the prayer meeting the vows of God are upon us, we are a separated people, and belong unto God alone! O see ye to this!

What have you to offer now? Have you brought an offering now? What will you render unto God for all His benefits towards you? Is there nothing to be done for Christ this afternoon? no sick one to be visited, no poor child to be instructed, no backslider to be reclaimed? Shall a single hour go by without a sacrifice? I charge you, brethren, continually bring of your substance, continually bring of your talent, continually bring of your influence.

If God be God, and if you be His priests, serve Him. If you be not His ordained ones, then you live unto yourselves, and it will be well to know it. Anything is better than to be hypocrites. But if you be true men I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies, your souls, your spirits unto God, which is but a reasonable service. When you have once for all made the consecration, may God grant you grace continually to stand to it, and He shall have the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EXODUS 29:1-37

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—411, 663, 878

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.