

Exod 05-02-20b

We pick up now our study, loosely centered in Exodus 28, also looking at Numbers chapter 3 about the Aaronic priesthood, or as we more generally term it, the Levitical priesthood, as it finds its genesis in Exodus, if you will. The term priest is the Hebrew word Kohen, K-O-H-E-N. You find people, you know, Bernie Cohen, you see a million guys in New York named Bernie Cohen.

Anybody with the last name Cohen, that's where his name came from. Kohen, K-O-H-E-N, it means priest. Or literally, one who officiates, one who presides.

The priests were not self-appointed, were they? Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 4 makes this point. We saw this a few weeks ago. No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

God decides. Now, we can look at our personal situation and rail against our fate, can't we? We can say, why did I get dealt this particular hand in the great poker game of life? Why am I under this authority? Or why am I subject to this pressure? Or why am I a victim of this circumstance or this situation? And we can rail and shake our fist and say, why me? Why now? Why here? Why didn't I get that over there? Why am I not on the other side of the fence where the grass is so much greener? God is dealing the hands, isn't he? God decides who you are and where you are in terms of circumstance and experience and situation, time in history, attributes that come from your heredity, attributes that come to you through environment and experience. The makeup of your current situation and my current situation right now is the sum total of everything that God in eternity past decided would be a factor in our lives.

God chose it. God set it up. God allowed it.

God knew about it. If you have a particular opportunity, if you have a particular calling, you're a parent or you're a boss or you're a teacher or you're not. God called each of us to the situation that we find ourselves facing.

Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 4, Christ himself was commissioned and sent into the world by God the Father. Luke chapter 4 and verse 18, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, Jesus read from Isaiah. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

He has anointed me. He, God the Father, has anointed me, God the Son, Jesus says, to preach, to heal, to proclaim, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. John chapter 17, verse 18, As you sent me into the world, Jesus prays to the Father, I also have sent them into the world.

Sent whom? What's John 17 talking about when Jesus says, I have sent them into the world? Eleven men. The eleven men in the upper room. The eleven men in the garden of Gethsemane.

Plus John Mark it would appear. John 20, verse 21, Jesus said to them again, Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.

Remember what we said in Matthew about noting the audience? Was Jesus sitting on the mount or on the plain where he gave his great sermons to hundreds of assembled listeners when he said, the Father sent me and I send you? Was he talking to upwards of 500 in one place? Was he talking to a combination of women and men gathered in worship somewhere? Who was Jesus speaking to when he said, as the Father has sent me, I also send you? The eleven. He's going to speak essentially the same words to the Apostle Paul, which is going to round out the twelve apostles. And so we understand that not being apostles, we can't necessarily appropriate everything that Jesus said to apostles to us, but of course it happens all the time.

God commissions. Some of us have been gifted in the area of preaching and teaching. Some of us have been gifted in the area of helps.

Some of us have been gifted in the areas of faith or prayer or testimony or evangelism. Lots of different things. That's our particular calling.

God assigned it. God gave it. We don't take it upon ourselves.

I didn't just wake up one morning and say, you know, I think that being a pastor would really be a great deal. I think I'll just get out of the Marine Corps and go do that. Quite the opposite.

It took me a long time to understand that that was my calling and was my gift and that I needed to stop resisting and stop having a distorted view of that function and get with the program and do what I was supposed to do. All of us have to look at where God has placed us, what strengths and weaknesses we are aware of in our own life and soul and what our opportunities are and how best we can fulfill the call of God. No man takes priesthood upon himself.

Priests had to be men who were able to show compassion. The whole idea of being a priest is you're supposed to have empathy with those for whom you are ministering. Same thing in Hebrews 5, once again, talking about Jesus.

He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also subject to weakness. This was true of the Levitical priests. This is the point made in Hebrews 5, and it was also true of the Lord Jesus.

He himself took on our flesh and was subjected to our pressures and things beyond what we will likely face. You have priests who took the priesthood upon themselves, like Ananias and Caiaphas in the New Testament, who are anything but compassionate. Ananias, you remember when Paul stands up and speaks? Ananias has somebody strike Paul on the mouth, slap him in the face.

And Paul says, you whitewashed wall, God will strike you. And somebody says, hey, you're talking to a high priest. And Paul says, oh, you weren't acting like a high priest, so I didn't treat you like one.

That was in Acts 23, by the way. God provided the office of priest. Why? Why was there a family priest? Why was there a Melchizedekian priest? Why is there a Levitical priest? Why? Because there is a separation between God and man.

There is a great gulf fixed between heaven and earth, between the divine and the earthly, between the righteous and the sinful. And we need a mediating agency. We need something that bridges that gap.

Who built the bridge? After the tower of Babel did all of the Hebrew speakers say, oh, this God is pretty powerful, let's try to find a way to please him. Who bridged the gap? Who designed the system and assigned it its symbolic meaning and function? God did. God bridged the gap.

God built the entire bridge from his side of the creek all the way across and invites man to walk across it. It's true today. We would be nothing.

We would have nothing. It's the whole point of our study in the particular section of Hebrews that we find ourselves that without the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, you and I are hopeless, helpless, useless. There is nothing to commend us to God outside of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

If he is not the way to the Father, there is no way. No man comes to the Father but by him. And the way that bridge built across that great gulf is Jesus Christ, specifically in his function as priest.

It is not the kingship of Christ that gets us saved. It is not the prophetic role of Jesus Christ that gets us saved. It's his priesthood.

You and I have no salvation. You and I have no cleansing and forgiveness. You and I have no access to God, no right to claim anything except a cozy spot in the lake of fire without the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

It is central. It is key. If you don't understand priesthood, you do not understand salvation.

You don't understand Christianity. You don't understand who you are, what's happening now, or what's going to happen in the future. You are clueless if you do not understand priesthood.

That's why the book of Hebrews is about nothing but priesthood as its central theme. So God provided the office of priest so that we who were cut off from him by sin could have access, could have a means of approach. The high priest interceded for the Israelites, both for his own sins and the sins of the people.

Again, we saw that in Hebrews chapter 5. Those who served in the priesthood could not have

any physical defects. You say, well, wait a minute. I'm in the tribe of Levi, and I'm descended from Ithamar, the son of Aaron, so I should be a priest.

But I looked down and found that I was born missing a finger. Or when they were first showing me how to do the sacrifices and I was practicing over here to the side, I lopped three of my fingers off with a sacrificial knife. Well, guess what? You're never going to be a priest.

You have to be physically without defect. You could be rejected for priestly service as a Levite if you had a body blemish, blindness, lameness, a flat nose, a broken foot, broken hand. Doesn't matter if it's your fault or not.

Somebody drops a brick on you from on high, breaks your foot, busts your collarbone, gives you a scar. You're done. If you were a hunchback, a dwarf, you say, ooh, God is so politically incorrect.

Discrimination against the handicapped. We should have had priests rolling in in wheelchairs. Well, obviously, eczema, seborrhea or psoriasis, scabs, being a eunuch either naturally or by an act of mankind.

I think I already told you the story of that Welsh rugby fan that turned himself into a eunuch in celebration of his team's victory after a string of 12 straight defeats. He made a bet in the bar. He was so sure that the Welsh were going to lose for a 13th time that he said if they win, I'll emasculate myself.

Well, they won and he was drunk enough. He went home and did it and brought the evidence back down to the bar and then passed out and had to rush him to the hospital where last I heard he was in critical condition. This just happened like last week or week before.

That's what I call being a devoted fan. The guy's like 26 years old. Any of those physical defects disqualified you for service.

Why? Because you function in a symbolic office. The symbolism of it is important. You're acting out.

You are representing the Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly role. And Jesus did not roll in in a wheelchair. Jesus did not come in with broken bones, blemishes, or defects.

He is the Lamb without spot and without blemish. And the picture of His priestly role is more important than the concerns of political correctness. More important than the feelings of some individual Levite who always wanted to be a priest but just lopped his finger off and can't.

Now, it was not a heartless and cruel system. If somebody was rejected for service, they were still provided for because of their birth. And if you go to Leviticus 21, verse 22 and 23, this Levite with the defect who is disqualified from priestly service, what does it say in Leviticus 21, 22? He may eat of the bread of his God.

He gets to eat the food of the priests. You know, they got to eat the show bread after it got rotated out. Both the Most Holy and the Holy.

Only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar because he has a defect, lest he profane my sanctuaries, for I the Lord sanctify them. So there is provision, but there is no bending of the rules. The genealogy was important.

They had to prove in the later years as there was more and more distance from Aaron. This becomes an issue in the time of Nehemiah, for example. You read the latter chapters of Nehemiah when they try to come back and restore worship.

And they're saying, well, I'm the son of Aaron. I want to be a priest. And the guy says, prove it.

Trot out your genealogy. Show me your lineage so we make sure we're not putting you in there when you shouldn't be. So when they would bring these guys in, and this is from Alfred Eidersheim, by the way.

This is what Eidersheim has to say. Certain genealogies were deemed authoritative. So if a man's father's name was inscribed in the archives of Jeshona at Zipporim, this was like the archives in Utah for your genealogy.

If you've got it all written down in that archive at Jeshona, no further inquiry was made. But if he failed to satisfy the court about his perfect legitimacy, the candidate was dressed and veiled in black and permanently removed. Talk about being blackballed.

Well, he was black robed. They put a black thing on him and get out of here. If he passed the ordeal, inquiry was next made as to any physical defects.

First is your genealogy. Do you have the right birth? Secondly, do you have the physical qualifications? Maimonides enumerates 140 physical defects that would permanently disqualify a man and 22 which would temporarily disqualify a man for the exercise of priestly offices. Men so disqualified were however admitted to menial offices such as the wood chamber.

You can chop the wood to keep the altar going. You can lead the animals around. You can do other menial tasks.

You just can't wear the robes and swing the knife. And they were entitled to temple support. This goes back to Leviticus 21.

Those who stood the two-fold test, genealogy is good, physical defects no problem, were dressed in white raiment and their names properly inscribed. Put on a white robe and have their names in the book. Eidersheim makes this point.

To this point allusion is made in Revelation 3.5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot his name out of the book of life. Isn't that interesting? White robe and a name. Because you're qualified.

You were found qualified to serve. Where many are not. Of course the tithes were instituted in Israel to support the priesthood.

The tithe of the first fruits, Deuteronomy 18. Grain, fruit, wine, oil, flour, and the fleece of sheep. Sheep.

Sheep fleeces. There was a special tithe every three years that was given to the Levites because they had no inheritance in the land of Canaan. You find that in Deuteronomy 14, 28 and 29.

There were 48 cities that were designated as Levitical cities within the territories of the other tribes so that priests could live there. You get that out of Joshua chapter 21. The firstborn from each family in Israel had to be redeemed back by paying five shekels to the priest.

Numbers 18. This is the substitutionary nature of the Levitical priesthood. Unclean beasts were redeemed with a set sum which the priesthood determined with a fifth part added to it.

Leviticus 27.27. The wave offering, where they had the breast and the right shoulder of a clean beast offered in sacrifice. That was the steak. That was the roast.

That was the stuff that the priest got to eat. The meat portion of their diet. Numbers 18.

A portion of the show bread and sacrifices were given to them for food. That's also in Numbers 18. The priest received redemption money for people or things that were dedicated to the Lord at special occasions.

Leviticus 27. A certain percentage of the spoils of war was divided among the Levites. Numbers 31.25-47. Why am I going through this list? Look at the parallel.

We are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Peter reminds us. What is the nature of our participation in these priestly benefits? Well, do we have the birth? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Born again.

What's the second qualification to get your white robe and your new name? No defect. Now, we are all full of defects, aren't we? When it comes to spiritual things, righteousness and a track record of sinlessness, none of us has it. So what does it mean, no defect? Well, you go back to Psalm 51, 1 John 1.9, and other passages.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be cleaned. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. It is not whether or not we sin.

It is whether or not we recover. It's whether or not we are on a daily endeavor to walk the narrow road and enter through the straight gate that leads to life. That is our lack of defect.

If we walk about having had to cut off our right hand because it offended us, or having to pluck out our right eye because it offended us, or having to chop off our foot because it offended us, so that we could go limping into life without an eye, without a hand, or without a foot, instead

of being thrown whole into perdition. Remember Jesus' great parable recorded in more than one gospel? What's he talking about there? You've got to find a way to get rid of the offense, or you're going to be halt, lame, or blind. We have a way.

It's God's grace. But we have to avail ourselves of it. We have to care enough about it to use it.

The priests had to stop by the labor and wash themselves so that they were ritually pure. They had to be careful not to break their own bones, not to lop off their own fingers, not to gouge out their own eye, and to avoid situations where that could happen to them accidentally by the action of someone else. Do not walk in the way of sinners.

Do not stand with the ungodly. Don't sit in the seat of the scornful. Don't hang around in places where you're likely to receive an injury that will disqualify you.

I'll give you an example. The Word of God has explicit criteria for elders in the church, especially those who preach and teach. It says they should be a one-woman man.

They should rule well their own household. They should not be given to anger. They should not be given to wine.

There's a whole list of characteristics. And failure in one or more of those areas disqualifies a man from standing up and preaching and teaching and serving as any kind of example in the church. Now, let's say somebody does that.

Let's say somebody is not a one-woman man. Let's say a pastor cheats on his wife with his secretary or engages in some illicit activities that started out as counseling a woman behind closed doors and ran amok. Is that a permanent disqualification or a temporary disqualification? Does he just serve a time of penance and then he can come back or not? Well, this, of course, has been the subject of much debate because many pastors have been found to err in these areas.

Well, I will tell you that once is enough. All of us sin. All pastors commit sins.

You have mental attitude sins. You have sins of the tongue. You have overword sins.

There's lots of things you can do, but there are certain listed sins, certain manifestations of problem, and if you commit them, you're done. It's over. If I were to commit adultery, I could put away my books, hang up my spurs, and never again study and teach the Word of God as a pastor because once is enough.

Just like lopping off a finger for a priest. There is no sewing that finger back on. It's gone.

It's over with. And any pastor who has committed one of those offenses and is still standing in a pulpit is not going to be blessed by God, is not going to have fruit out of that ministry, and is going to be in trouble at the judgment for airing himself and leading others astray, teaching his doctrines, the commandments of men, granting a forgiveness to self that God does not forgive.

That doesn't mean you can't be restored.

It doesn't mean you can't recover, that you can't have a great and fruitful life as a believer if you commit one of those things. Priests who were disqualified because of a physical defect didn't get kicked out of Israel. They didn't take them out there and say, you see the scapegoat? Just follow him.

Go off in the wilderness never to be seen again. Did they? They just couldn't serve as priests. It's not a life sentence.

It's not a permanent condemnation. It is a disqualification. A woman is disqualified from being a pastor.

Nothing wrong with women. I rather like them. But God says no women as priests, no women as pastors and teachers.

It's just God's design. So if you don't like it, take it up with him. That's what he said.

It's not a pronouncement about your quality or your recoverability or the level of spiritual life that you can attain. There's a specific function that you can or cannot fulfill based on certain rather arbitrary criteria that God has chosen and that's one of them. So when a congregation looks at a pastor, they need to be able to go down that list of qualifications and say he is not given much wine.

He is not prone to outbursts of anger. He does rule well his own household. He is a one-woman man, etc., etc., etc.

If you ever find me to not meet that criteria, you need to pack up and go somewhere else because I will have disqualified myself and I shouldn't be standing up here preaching and teaching the word of God. The point here is there were criteria for the priesthood and if you don't meet them, you miss out on the benefits of the priesthood. You have a minimal level of support, but you miss out on opportunity to serve and you miss out on special privileges and blessings.

The same is true for you and for me. We are priests. We are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and it's up to us to not disqualify ourselves.

What does the Apostle Paul say? I run like I want to win the race, not in a way that disqualifies me. Only those who have been divinely chosen by God and were born into the tribe of Levi could serve as priests. All others who came near the tabernacle in an unauthorized manner were subject to God's judgment.

The book of Numbers opens with a reminder. Numbers chapter 1, verse 50. You shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, over all its furnishings, over all the things that belong to it.

They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings. They shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down.

When the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. You say, so this guy from the tribe of Simeon happened by and a tent stake wasn't going in right and I lost the line and the thing was starting to collapse and the guy from Simeon comes over and gives me a hand setting up the tabernacle.

Absolutely. Penalty of death. But he meant well.

Well, Uzzah meant well. You saw what God did to him. It's not how well you mean or what a great guy you are or shirt off the back, salt of the earth.

It doesn't matter. God says only certain ones can do it. And we can be as well-meaning and well-intentioned as we want to be, but if we do not meet God's criteria for our priesthood, you and I can be equally disqualified, equally cut off and suffer great loss.

Korah, Dathan and Abiram, you remember that story in Numbers 16? What happened when they intruded into things that were forbidden to them by God? Well, the earth opened and swallowed them up. I think it's about as graphic a demonstration of God's displeasure as you'll find in the Bible. There were others who did this.

You remember King Saul? Over in 1 Samuel 13? When he got tired of waiting for Samuel? He'd only been a king for a week, less than a week. Samuel said, wait till I come. I'll offer the sacrifice.

Well, they kept waiting and waiting. The troops were melting away because the tactical situation was looking kind of dismal. So Saul says, we don't hurry up and engage this battle.

I'm not going to have anybody left to fight it with. So what did he do? He offered the burnt offering. He's the king.

Is he a priest after the order of Melchizedek? That would be a big negatory. So you see what happens in 1 Samuel 13 to him. A lesser known story, King Uzziah was smitten with leprosy over in 2 Chronicles 26.

Uzziah was smitten with leprosy when he tried to offer incense in the temple and he remained a leper until his death. By the way, when you read the story of Uzziah, you know where that leprosy broke out? Right here. Right in the forehead.

What was missing? Holy to the Lord. Where's the emblem that says you can come in and offer incense before God? Leprosy broke out right in the middle of his forehead and remained until his death because he did not have the necessary commission from God to do that. Well, we of course are a kingdom of priests.

Not only does Peter tell us this, but in Revelation 1, verse 6, John says he has made us kings and priests to his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. You can see the

obvious parallels between the Levitical priesthood and our own.

The verse I have been quoting to you is 1 Peter 2.9. You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people. That you may do what? What's the purpose of our priesthood? 1 Peter 2.9. That you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, reflecting the glory of God. That's the purpose of our priesthood.

Well, you look at the clothing of the high priest for glory and for beauty. You look at the ephod and the robe, the breastplate, the urim and the thumim, the headdress that was to wrap or roll around the head of the priest. Josephus described that thing as made of thick linen swaths in his day, wrapped around the head of the high priest similar to a turban.

This is in Antiquities 3.7.3. If you want to look up Josephus talking about the priesthood. Played a pure golden grape with the words holiness to the Lord. Was placed on a blue lace tied to the front of the miter or the turban.

Had two purposes. First of all, Scripture says, he was to bear the iniquity of the holy things. This is bear or carry.

The Greek word is pharaoh, translating to Hebrew. Pharaoh to bear or carry. Well, carry around or carry away.

So you're going to walk into the presence of God carrying the sins of the people. Whole idea is he carries them away. He is an instrument of resolution of those iniquities.

He was able to carry away the iniquities of the people by the atoning sacrifice made on the day of atonement. You have this in Leviticus 10.17. Why have you not eaten the sin offering in a holy place since it is most holy and God has given it to you to bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord? That plate was always to be on the forehead of the high priest so that Israelites would be acceptable before the Lord. We are made righteous.

What is our mark? What is our seal? What makes us acceptable before God? It's one of the five ministries of the Holy Spirit inaugurated at our salvation, isn't it? He is the seal of our redemption. He is the seal of God's ownership. The Holy Spirit is the equivalent of that emblem on our forehead.

So, how careful are we about that emblem? How valuable do we consider it? How much attention do we pay to it? What do you think would happen if the priest was out there playing hoops or something and his hat fell off and he forgot about his little emblem, went back into the priesthood, or if he got it on backwards? Do you think he treated that thing as a casual item of apparel? It's one of the most important things he's got because without it he will die trying to approach the Lord. Do modern day Christians have the same level of respect for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the same level of awe in approaching God, recognizing that without that seal we would be destroyed trying to talk to God? It's an important thing. That holy to the Lord seal is

pretty important.

It reminds us that our lives and our service are to be holy. Peter says in 1 Peter 1, 15 and 16, Just as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all your manner of life. Because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy.

I like the way that comes out in the original King James. The breeches, the trousers that we saw described last time made from linen were to cover the nakedness of the priest from his loins to his thighs. They were kind of like the shorts that you see a lot of guys wearing today, these longish kind of baggy shorts from the loins to the thighs.

Many of the nations that had pagan worship and pagan priesthoods didn't cover up their priests. I mean, you've got women priests, you've got all kinds of shenanigans going on where people are in various states of dress or undress. But most of the pagan priesthoods made no attempt to cover up nakedness and in some cases glorified it on the part of their priests.

God says you cover up the priests. The priests were to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. You have that in Psalms.

You remember, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. We need to be sure that we are similarly properly attired when we come before the Lord. Hebrews 10, we've looked at it many times.

1 Timothy 2, 9 and 10. In like manner also, women ought to adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing. Now you've got your Mennonites and that ilk that say, okay, no cosmetics, no jewelry.

We're going to walk around looking like death warmed over, like we just rolled out of bed and all we did was put our hair in a bun. That's not what this verse is saying. Cosmetics are a wonderful thing.

Jewelry that is in good taste and appropriate is a wonderful thing. Anything you can do to enhance your appearance within reason, I'm not talking surgery here, but I'm talking about the measures you can take to disguise less euphonious features in your face is great. What is this verse talking about when it says, not with braided hair or gold or pearls? Do not base your appearance on these things.

Your braided hair, your gold, your pearls, your costly clothing is not the basis of your appearance. Your adornment, which is proper for women professing godliness, is good works. The point here is not, don't worry about your physical beauty, it just has no value.

He says, don't count on the way you look or the way you can make yourself look with a couple of hours of effort to make you acceptable in God's sight. Your adornment before God is not braided hair, gold, pearls, or costly clothing. Your adornment, which is proper for women professing godliness, is to be adorned in God's sight.

And that adornment is the outworking of your faith. Good works. Works based in faith.

Righteousness by faith. As James says, faith without works is dead, being fruitless. 1 Peter 3.3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward.

This is Peter talking. Do not let your adornment be merely outward, arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel. Same idea.

Look as nice as you want to, just don't count on that getting you in. Jesus isn't standing at the gates of the kingdom saying, well you look pretty good, come on in. The coat or tunic that was worn under the outer clothing of the high priest, according to Josephus, had tight-fitting sleeves and reached down to the feet.

You see various depictions of this graphically. We were looking at one in BAR this past week where the thing came down kind of mid-calf or so. Josephus says it came all the way down.

The tunic was held in place by a girdle of needlework. The whole idea is it's for glory and for beauty. But in the same way that the garments of the high priest did not alone qualify him to approach, it's the man inside the clothes that had to be pure and had to be acceptable, had to be ritually clean.

That's what Peter is talking about. That's what the Word of God is talking about in terms of adornment when the Apostle Paul speaks. Garments in Scripture are always symbolic.

Generally you find garments symbolizing righteousness or lack thereof. When you go to the wedding feast and the guy gets picked up because he doesn't have on the right clothes and he's picked up and cast out, these garments are robes of righteousness. Isaiah 61.10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Nothing wrong with adornment with jewels.

But the point is, have you got the real adornment? Have you got the real clothing? Can we operate in our priesthood with the right vestures? Have we adorned ourselves with righteousness, with good works? Paul uses clothing similarly over in Colossians 3. Years gone by we did the book of Colossians. But now you yourselves are to put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.

Twice in two verses Paul uses this word, put off. And it's the word used in Greek for taking off your clothes, divesting yourself of a dirty garment. Put off anger, put off wrath, put off malice, grudge bearing, put off blasphemy, put off filthy language that's in your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, looking at the fact that you have put off the old man with his deeds. Any rank unbeliever can do that kind of thing. Even few of us as believers make the attempt to do something different.

The way that we accomplish this, how do we make sure our garments are spotless, that we've got on the right vestures to operate as priests? Again, Colossians 3, first verse. If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above. Pull your head out of the earth, if you will.

Quit getting caught up in the immediate and the transient and the temporary, the mundane. Seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. What is going on there with Christ seated at the right hand of God? We just saw this in Hebrews, didn't we? He's functioning in priesthood.

This is a call to remember the priesthood. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Now, again, just like with adornment, does this mean, oh well, we should be so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good? Don't worry about anything.

Don't pay any attention to what time it is. Obviously not. Where am I supposed to be? What am I supposed to do? Oh, set your mind on things in heaven.

Don't worry about that. I mean, it is to laugh, right? Use your common sense. When it says set your mind, this is talking about the underpinnings, the foundation of our priorities, our goals, and our values.

Those ought to have as their bedrock things in heaven and not things on earth. What motivates us to roll out of bed in the morning? Being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we have power to live the overcomer life. Colossians 3, once again, verse 10.

We have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge. That's why we spend our time studying the Word of God. It's really important.

It's not just a way to while away an hour and a half, a couple, three times a week. It's important because the new man, if we want to have those clothes, if we want to be qualified and enjoy the benefits and the privileges and the opportunities of a priest, we've got to be sure we're clean. We've got to be sure we're operating in this priesthood.

How do you do it? Well, the new man who has put off the old garments is renewed in knowledge and made in the standard of the image of him who created him. We are returned to the image of God by the renewing of our minds, the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Revelation 19, verse 8. Remember the woman? To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright. Well, Moses took the anointing oil, the blood that was on the altar, sprinkled it on Aaron and upon his garments and

upon his sons and upon his sons' garments with him and sanctified Aaron and his garments and his sons and his sons' garments with him. They were sprinkled with blood and that was the beginning of that priesthood.

We have been sprinkled with the more precious blood of Christ. We have the opportunity to avail ourselves day by day, decision by decision, policy by policy, action by action, circumstance by circumstance of our priesthood to be good and faithful servants. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for so clearly illustrating for us through the Old Testament examples the opportunities that we have to live in this age to fulfill our calling to function in our priesthood under the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who even now sits at your right hand, interceding on our behalf, functioning in his priestly capacity, bridging the gap between heaven and earth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts, remind us of them, so that we can exploit the potential of our remaining time on this earth and be prepared to function in the kingdom that is to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.