

# *deeper*

word faith life

## Season 4

The Doctrine of the Church  
The Priesthood of Believers  
The Mission of the Church  
Church History  
The Reformation  
Calvinism and Arminianism

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## Episode 3 – The Priesthood of Believers

1 Peter 2:4,5 - “As you come to Him, the living Stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9,10 - “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

### What is the Priesthood of Believers?

Although the term is never mentioned in the New Testament, the concept is very clearly implied here by Peter. Paul writes of something similar in His letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:10 - “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

This implication is carried through into John’s writing.

Revelation 5:9,10 - “And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

In the 16th century, Martin Luther used the phrase, “The priesthood of all believers.” The prevailing notion of the medieval church, was that God works only through a select class of priests, and that salvation was only attainable by the sacraments exclusively administered by these priests. Luther’s opposition to the idea of the priests being of a higher order than ordinary people is reflected in his own words, “Faith alone is the true priestly office.” And, “This word priest should become as common as the word Christian.”

All Christians are priests regardless of their full-time occupation. All Christians are priests whether they are aware of it or not. For those believers who realise this truth, there is a deep sense of purpose, and along with that a sense of great privilege.

In the Old Testament, priests were chosen by God, they were not self-appointed, and they were chosen for a purpose, to serve God with their lives by offering up sacrifices. This priesthood served as a “type” or shadow of the coming ministry of Jesus. Once His sacrifice on the cross was completed, there was no further need for the old priesthood. The temple veil that covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies was torn in two by God at the time of Jesus’ death, (Matthew 27:51) indicating that the Old Testament priesthood was no longer necessary, and that all people could approach God based on their standing in Christ. So Jesus became our great High Priest, (Hebrews 4:14-16) bringing the Law and the temple system to its logical conclusion. (Matthew 5:17) There is now no need for any earthly mediators between God and man as in the Old Testament. (1 Timothy 2:5) Christ our great High Priest has made one sacrifice for sin for all time and there is no more sacrifice for sin that can be made. (Hebrews 10:12,26)

Because of our union with Christ, believers are included in His priesthood. It is clear from our text that God has chosen believers “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” As believers our priestly purpose is wrapped up in our mission to “declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness...”. Our priestly privilege is found in our identity as “chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession”.



### Imagery from the Old Testament

We will now go back to the Old Testament and look at the consecration, or setting apart of the first Levitical priests, namely Aaron and His sons. There are three aspects to their consecration which is true of every true believer today.

Leviticus 8:6 - "Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water."

Leviticus 8:12 - "He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him."

Leviticus 8:23 - "Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot."

Leviticus 8:30 - "Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments."

Every true believer in Christ has been consecrated for priestly duties in the new priesthood of believers. The three consecrating elements used in the Old Testament ordination of priests were blood, water, and oil. All believers have experienced these three elements impacting their lives. Hebrews 10:19-22 - "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

\_\_\_\_\_ - We are washed clean of our guilt by the atoning blood of Jesus. His blood cleanses us, we are redeemed, bought and paid for in full. Complete and ready for priestly service.

1 Peter 1:19,19 - "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

\_\_\_\_\_ - When we go through the waters of baptism, we are symbolically washed of a guilty conscience as we are buried and resurrected into a new life. Baptism is therefore our public declaration that we have put our faith in Christ. Complete and ready for priestly service.

1 Peter 3: 21 - "and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God."

\_\_\_\_\_ - This element is often used in Biblical terminology to refer to the Holy Spirit. It represents the anointing and enabling grace of God for ministry. In the life of a believer, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit through His fruit, should be recognisable and effective. In addition, His anointing and the bestowing of His gifts make us complete and ready for priestly service.

Acts 1:8 - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Romans 15:16 - "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

### What does the Priesthood of Believers do?

Under the New Covenant, every believer in Jesus Christ is a holy priest. As priests, they offer spiritual sacrifices "through Jesus Christ". (1 Peter 2:5) Spiritual sacrifices replace the material sacrifices of the Old Covenant (Exodus 29:36). Priests are no longer a



separate or elite class, and they no longer offer bulls, goats, and lambs on the altar. (Hebrews 10:1–11) Not only do believers constitute the new priesthood, but they are the “living stones” forming the spiritual temple of God. (1 Peter 2:5) Our worship today involves the offering of spiritual sacrifices. Our spiritual sacrifices today, include the believer’s prayers, praises, will, bodies, time, talents, and treasure. Such sacrifices are made acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

\_\_\_\_\_ - This is a spiritual sacrifice. Under the law, incense, often associated with prayer, was offered on the altar of incense in the tabernacle and temple. David prayed, “May my prayer be set before you like incense”. (Psalm 141:2) In his vision of heaven, John saw that the elders around the throne “were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people”. (Revelation 5:8) Our prayers offered to God ascend as the smoke of the incense ascended in the sanctuary. The fact that the incense was always burning means that we should pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

\_\_\_\_\_ - God created us to praise Him, and we offer a “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15) when we turn toward God rather than away from Him in the midst of suffering. Praise is easy when all is right with our world, but many times we are called to praise Him in the midst of a storm. When we resist the urge to question God in our circumstances, and instead offer praises, that becomes a spiritual sacrifice. We are to give thanks and praise in all situations. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Surrendering our \_\_\_\_\_ - Just as Jesus surrendered His will to the Father’s, (Luke 22:42) so should we surrender our’s. The surrender of our will is an ongoing battle we all face. The sin nature that resides within each of us battles for supremacy (Romans 7:18–20). Self wants to rule. It is an act of worship when we willingly crucify self and surrender to the will of God. We choose His way rather than our own.

Present our \_\_\_\_\_ - As “living sacrifices”. (Romans 12:1–2) Our bodies are the temple of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 6:18–20) Those who are in Christ offer themselves completely to the Lord. They offer their bodies daily to God, asking Him to live His life through them. (Galatians 2:20) Through our bodies we witness, we share the good news and we give expression to the gifts he has endowed us with. We become faithful ministers of the gospel and stewards of God’s grace. (1 Peter 4:10)

\_\_\_\_\_ - We offer our resources to the Lord. If we understand the concept of stewardship, then we realise that we are only managers of God’s resources He has blessed us with. Everything we have and everything we are, belong to God.

### Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:10

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

