

Priestly Attributes

by George Warnock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of developing priestly attributes such as compassion and mercy in believers to effectively serve God and others.

Duration: 48:41

Scripture: Exodus 32:10-14, Exodus 32:32, Amos 7:2-3, Micah 6:8, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Priesthood"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the role of Jesus as a priest and emphasizes his ability to save completely all who come to God through him. The preacher also highlights the importance of believers imitating Jesus in doing righteousness. The sermon references the story of Joshua and how his defeat in battle was attributed to the sin of one member of the community. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the need for believers to allow the gifts of the Spirit to work in their lives and transform their nature.

Transcript

So, Her dwelling shall not be cut off. Or is it six? Five. Thinking last week, last few days, concerning the attributes of the priest that God is seeking to bring forth in his people, there's a lot of talk these days about the kingdom, because we're aware that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the prayer of the Church has been these two thousand years, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We continue to pray it. We'll continue to do so until that kingdom does come. But so often, I think we've emphasized this from time to time, we fail to realize that God's kings are priests.

The world has had its share of dictators and ruthless rulers. God isn't interested in establishing any kind of a dictatorship, even under his sons. God is establishing a kingdom whose kings will be priests unto God.

And so it even says of Christ himself that he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne. So Christ today, who rules and reigns at the Father's right hand with all power over all flesh, the Bible says, Jesus declared in John 17, that great high priestly prayer, Thou hast given him power over all flesh. Others translate, over all mankind.

I know many are teaching that Christ isn't king yet. He won't be king until he comes back. He went away to be king.

He went away to be king, and then he'll come back to exercise judgment in the earth. He went away to be a king and a priest on the throne, that in these 2,000 years of his kingly reign, he would rule and reign at the Father's right hand in the midst of enemies, as God decreed. You say, well, if he was king, why don't we see a better situation on the earth? Because God says, you rule in the midst of your enemies.

Well, then why doesn't he subdue the enemies? He's doing that. But God has a time schedule. And the Lord isn't interested in doing anything on his own.

He's only doing what God has committed unto him to do according to the eternal purpose. And according to the eternal purpose, God says, Rule at my right hand until all enemies are subdued unto your feet. You see, I don't see any enemies being subdued, but God does, and we do.

And God has decreed that Christ shall rule and reign at his right hand until every enemy is subdued. But even while he reigns as king, he's also a priest on the throne. He shall sit and rule upon his throne.

He shall be a priest upon his throne. And that puts a little different slant on the whole picture when we realize there's a priest there whose concern is for his people. His concern is for mankind, for he loves them with an everlasting love.

And so he's not up there trying to find an opportunity to condemn you every time you do something wrong. That seems to be the notion the world has, and many Christians have it, as they live under that condemnation that the Lord is there with all power in heaven, and he's just waiting for me to make a slip, and then he's going to exercise his wrath against me. Do you know that Jesus Christ is at God's right hand as your lawyer before the throne of justice to spare you from the wrath of God, not to bring it upon you? He's there bearing five bleeding wounds in his glorified body.

And every wound, as the songwriter says, cries out, Forgive him, O forgive, they cry, nor let that ransomed sinner die. He's there as a priest, wherefore also he's able to save to the uttermost, to the very end, completely, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. But then, you see, and this is a mystery that God's been revealing these past few years, he is now in the process of bringing his body into this vital relationship with him that as he is, so we should be in this world.

That as he does righteousness, so should we do righteousness. That as he rules and reigns in the throne, so we should reign in life by Christ Jesus. And he came and showed us the way by becoming the way.

And he doesn't reign in the heavens just as the great and mighty prophet or messiah. He reigns because he came to earth and learned obedience as a son. He came into subjection in this realm on earth where he could learn obedience.

He couldn't learn it in the heavens. All he knew there was authority over all celestial and earthly beings. He came down to our realm that he might learn obedience.

He came into our nature, into our flesh, that we might come up into his likeness and into his image. Some people think it's an awful thing, an impossible thing, that you and I should come into his image and likeness. Have you ever considered how awful a thing it was for him to come down into your likeness? Oh, yes, he came down into my likeness.

Have you ever considered what a tremendous step that was? Think that over. And then if you can once settle it in your heart that he did come down and come into my likeness, took upon him even my sins and

my infirmities, then don't think it a strange thing that having accomplished the work of redemption, he should bring you up into his image and into his likeness. Which is the hardest, I'd like to ask? For you to come into the image of Christ or for Christ to come down into the image and likeness of man? Which is the hardest? He did the hardest thing that he might bring us up into his own image and his own likeness.

And so God's after a priestly nature in his people. That's what he's after. And so Paul writes concerning the attributes of our high priest in Hebrews 5. And he says, Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

God wanted a priest. God had kings all through the Old Testament. God had priests in the Old Testament.

But the kingdom and the priesthood were always kept separate, except as they came together. Very rare occasions, like in Melchizedek in the Old Testament, and also in a measure in David, who entered into the tabernacle of David and sat down before the Lord and communed with the Lord right in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant as a priest, and even was clothed upon with priestly garments as the Ark of the Lord returned to the camp of Israel. He had a little foretaste of it, but more a prophetic foretaste, speaking of the time when Christ would be not only king, but priest on the throne.

And so God's priests are those who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, those who are erring, those who have missed the way, and on the ignorant. They're those who've gone the wrong way, despite the fact that they knew the right way. They've deliberately gone the wrong way.

Through temptation, through not being able to stand the test, they've gone the wrong way. And the priest is for them. But then there's others who are simply ignorant.

They just don't know any better. And so the priests of the Lord are those who can have compassion on the ignorant, as well as on those who have erred and gone out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Once we realize, you see, God's purpose in his people, we can forget the past.

We can even forget all the condemnation that we've carried in the past because of our waywardness. Not by way of justifying it, but by way of recognizing, God allowed me to go this way in order that I might learn compassion. God allowed me to go the way I've gone, so that having come forth triumphantly and victoriously, I will have learned compassion and long-suffering and mercy towards those who've gone astray.

Now, God wants this kind of a priest, you see, and so therefore he'll choose from among men those who are similar to other men. Oh, I know there are some men, and I remember at various times looking upon great men in the church and thinking how great they were, how holy they were, how righteous they were. And yet many of these men, I would not want to go to them and pour out my heart.

Righteous, perhaps, just, holy, but a great barrier there, you see. But God's priests who are able to function as priests are those who are similar to other men. They're taken from amongst men.

They're no different in nature. And so it was necessary, if God was going to have a priest on the throne, that his son would come down and take upon himself the form and the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinning himself, but taking upon himself the form of sinful flesh.

And though not sinning himself, actually bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, so that he would be able to have compassion on those who were suffering, those who were sick, those who were bound by sin, he would be able to show compassion. The attribute, the first mentioned attribute of God's priest is one who can have compassion. One who can have compassion.

One who will be able to show mercy. So once we recognize what God is doing, I believe we can accept any situation that comes. Knowing what God is working out in our lives, accept it as from him.

If people are dealing with us in an unreasonable way, persecuting, whatever it might be, we can receive it as from the Lord, saying, Lord, you're seeking to bring forth something from my life that will be akin to your own nature. So I can receive it from you. And as strange as it may seem, we're not going to be able to show mercy on others unless others have been merciless to us.

We're not going to be able to manifest the love and the kindness of God to others unless others have shown hatred and persecuted us. Because in these things coming against us, as we receive it as from the Lord, we'll work in us the nature and the attributes of this priest that God is after. We'll work those attributes within us.

So it's one thing to have an understanding of what God has for your life, and God gives us a little understanding from time to time to encourage us, to, as it were, set our sights, set our goals. But the outworking of it is always vastly different than we can expect it. And the outworking of it seemingly takes us in a pathway which leads us further and further away from the ultimate goal.

So Moses had a vision as a young man of one day being a deliverer of God's people. Just when that vision came upon him, we don't know. But no doubt, having been brought up in the courts of Pharaoh, and yet knowing that he was a Hebrew, the understanding came to him that he was to be God's deliverer for this people.

And he thought the children of Israel would have understood, but they didn't understand. And so through a series of circumstances, we see him having to leave the whole project and flee into the land of Midian, and you might say, forget the dream, forget the vision. Nevertheless, in that place where God placed him, out there in the desert, out there in the wilderness, God was bringing forth that character in him that when he was ready for it, he would go back and he would be the kind of a deliverer that God wanted.

He would be exactly the kind of a deliverer that God wanted, a man who would be a priest unto God. You say, was Moses a priest? Yes, he was a priest. Moses and Aaron are numbered amongst the priests, we're told in the Psalms.

A true priest unto God, because his concern was no longer for himself. No longer was he going by his own ideas or theories in the matter. He was going according to an established plan and blueprint and according to a divine call.

And he learned mercy in all these years of his exile. It had mellowed his heart that he was prepared to go God's way and let God do it. He would do it simply under God's direction.

When God laid the burden of the nation upon him, he became a true priest. And he realized that his responsibility was unto God, but his concern was for the people. And when the people disobeyed, when Moses brought them out and brought them across the Red Sea with a mighty victory, then God left the people in Moses' care, you might say, for 40 years.

And what a frustrating time it was with Moses. But he had learned in the previous 40 years the ways of a priest. And so he was able to prevail before God on behalf of the people and to bring them forth.

On many occasions, God would have wiped them off the face of the earth. But Moses, the priest of God, came in and intervened and stood in the gap. And that's really what God wanted.

That's what God was really after. That's why he chose Moses. Because he knew that now Moses had no selfish interest of his own.

His concern was for the people, so God put him in that place. He found a man who could have compassion. When God said, Let me alone Moses, and I'll wipe them off the face of the earth, and I'll make of you a greater nation, Moses says, Not so, Lord.

Then will the Egyptians hear. Then they'll say, God wasn't able to deliver them. God blot my name out of the book, but spare your people.

Now, these are important issues. Because we're living in a day when God is certainly manifesting his power and his authority. He's manifesting ministries.

But unless the Lord succeeds in working in our lives these attributes, those very ministries can be our downfall. Those very ministries can become our downfall. And that's really the attitude that God was seeking to bring forth from Moses.

When he says, Moses, I'm going to destroy this nation. I'll make of you a greater nation. Now, God would have done it.

But how happy was the heart of God when Moses says, No, Lord. They're your people. Blot my name out of the book, but spare your people.

And God says, I've forgiven. I've forgiven according to your word. But as we've mentioned so often, God, who is impartial, he added this little note there that, Yes, I'll forgive, Moses, as you said, but as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

I'm going to forgive this people. To be fair and just, then one day I'm going to have to extend my mercy so much that the whole world, the whole earth will be filled with my glory. But these are things that ought to cause everyone of us to examine our hearts.

You see, it's far more important that God develop in us the attributes of a priest than it is that our prophecies are fulfilled. Now, let these things enter into our hearts. Because I'm aware that there's certain prophecies and so forth going forth from time to time to frighten God's people.

It's far more important that your prophecy fails and that you intercede and pray before God that none of these things that God has shown you come to pass than it is that your prophecy should be fulfilled. I used to sing in Sunday school days, I don't want to be a Jonah, but Jonah was a prophet of the Lord, spoke the words of God. He was a selfish, bigoted man who had no compassion.

Do you know why Jonah wouldn't go to Nineveh? A lot of questions. Why didn't Jonah want to go to Nineveh? All kinds of theories. Jonah tells us why, plainly.

He says, Lord, if I go to Nineveh and prophesy to them the words that you give me, they'll repent and then you won't fulfill my prophecy. That's what he said. If I go and prophesy that word that you've given me to them, I know very well that you won't fulfill it because they'll repent perhaps and then you'll change your mind.

Because he says, I know that you're a God who repents of the evil. God wants prophets, but he wants prophets who will be priests. Prophets who will say, Lord, what you've shown me concerning this individual is right.

God, let that punishment come upon me, but spare this member of your body. Micah was another prophet who was a true prophet of the Lord. Let's turn to Micah.

God showed Micah visions of judgments that he was going to send upon the land, that he planned to send on the land. And it frightened the prophet. Let's see, Micah.

No, it's Amos. Thus hath the Lord God shown unto me, and behold, he formed grasshoppers, or locusts, in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, or the second growth. He had two crops, apparently.

And then the king would send out his servants, and they'd take off the crop for the king's household and all their officers. And then when the second growth came up, that was for the people. And God caused these locusts to come forth in the time of the second growth, and came to pass them when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land.

Then I said, O Lord God, forgive I beseech thee. By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? The Lord repented for this. It shall not be, saith the Lord.

The Amplified Version says, The Lord relented and revoked this sentence. It shall not take place, said the Lord. And he was eased and comforted concerning it.

Amos had a vision. Grasshoppers at the time of the second crop. The king had got his share.

The people hadn't got theirs yet. And Amos, the true priest of God, he says, O God, don't let this come to pass. Israel's too small.

It'll destroy them. You see? A prophet of God, but he was prepared to see his prophecy fail in order that his people might be delivered. Don't let it happen, Lord.

And the Lord repented for this. It shall not be, saith the Lord. And the Lord showed him another vision, because Israel was going through a time of great apostasy.

There was great wickedness in the land. And God would rise up and declare his judgments. Amos was one of the prophets whom the Lord sent to declare his judgments.

And they didn't like it. He says, Why don't you go on back and prophesy in your own hometown? They said, Leave us alone here. This is the king's chapel.

This is the king's house. Prophesying like that here in Bethel? Amos says, I'm not a prophet. Neither am I the son of a prophet.

I just look after sycamore trees and I do gardening. But God told me to come down and declare these words. And so there was a lot of things that had to be repented of in the land of Israel.

But Amos, as a true prophet of the Lord, he interceded, he stood in the gap, stood up on behalf of his people. The Lord showed him another vision. He saw a vision of a great fire.

Behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and it ate up a part. What a vision, this great fire engulfing the land. And the ocean.

And Amos says, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee. By whom shall Jacob arise? He's small. And the Lord repented for this.

This also shall not be, saith the Lord. The Lord relented and revoked this sentence. It shall not take place, said the Lord, and he was eased and comforted concerning it.

I believe that in this hour of great trouble that's coming on the earth, God is seeking right now to bring forth this priestly characteristic in his people so that in that time, we'll be able to stand in the gap on behalf of God's people and the earth. But he must have a people who can have compassion and mercy and longsuffering. He must have that kind of a people.

That's why when situations come against you that would cause retaliation, where there's lack of mercy, you show lack of mercy. Where there's lack of longsuffering, you show lack of longsuffering. And you give as you receive.

You're not qualifying as a priest of God. And therefore, you're not qualifying to rule and reign with him. Because God's kings are those who will have the priestly attributes.

So it's very important that whatever situation arises, that we receive this situation as from the Lord, that so it might mellow our hearts before him and bring us closer unto himself, that there be no thought whatever of revenge or retaliation or any unforgiveness or any desire for self-justification. Far better that our prophecies should fail, if so be that God's people are shown mercy. Then the Lord showed him another vision, very simple, but there was a lot involved with it, a plumb line.

God had a plumb line in his hand by the time he spoke on this, I think a week or so ago. He said, I'm not going to change my mind on this. I'm not changing my mind on this.

I've got a standard for my people. I'm going to see that my standard is met. I'm not going to change my mind regarding the plumb line.

In the days of Jeremiah to just before the captivity, Jeremiah had been prophesying some very hard things against the nation, very severe things. In fact, God had told him to go and speak these words to the people. I think that's it.

I don't often copy down scriptures like this. Jeremiah 26. But I thought we should go through some of these scriptures to come to an understanding of God's ways in this matter.

God had told Jeremiah to go and stand in the court of the Lord's house and to speak unto the cities of Judah which come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that I command thee to speak unto them. Diminish not a word. If so be they will hearken.

Turn every man from his evil way that I may repent me of the evil. You see, God is not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent. So let's understand what God is saying when he says that I may repent me of the evil.

It's because God doesn't change his mind. It's because God has an eternal purpose that if his people obey him and line up with him, then he also relents and revokes the sentence of judgment that he passed upon them. So he's not really changing his mind.

He's just telling you, now, this is your fate if you line up with me and if you don't, this is what it is. And so he'll declare his judgments through the words of his prophet. And as the words of the prophecy go forth from the mouth of the prophet and from the heart of God, God's thought is, now, if this word will cause these people to repent, then I can change my mind and I can show mercy.

And that's why God sent Jonah to Nineveh. It's a great city there. God had compassion on them.

And so he says, Jonah, go down to Nineveh and prophesy. Jonah says, Lord, if I do that, I know they'll repent and then you won't fulfill the prophecy. Nothing would have pleased Jonah more than to see Nineveh wiped off the face of the earth.

Because we read about the way Nineveh was rising up and threatening the little nation of Israel. These patriotic Jews didn't like it. But you see, God doesn't repent, you see.

He doesn't change his mind and things like that. If a man repents, then God turns the other side of his face. He shows mercy.

He's not changing his mind. And so he had to take this bigoted prophet to a very hard lesson. He got on a boat going to another place and they had to throw him out of the boat to calm the storm.

God had a great fish prepared, swallowed up Jonah, and there Jonah repented. And the great fish swallowed up and bounded up Jonah on dry land and he went to Nineveh as a sign. This time there was no question about it that people would repent now.

You see, you're not going to change God's plan. And no disobedient prophet is going to change God's plan. Now he went as a sign.

Before he would have gone as a prophet and Jonah was afraid they might repent, but now there was no question about it. He was a sign. Jesus said he was a sign to his generation.

Here is a man who had been... I think no doubt he bore blemishes on his skin and on his body that proved that he had indeed been in the heart of a whale because we're told he was a sign to that generation. How could they help but repent? This man was trying to run away from God with this message. He comes to us out of the belly of a whale.

Truly God must mean business and they repented from the king right down to the lowest of them. And therefore God relented, revoked the sentence and Jonah was mad about it. So God says this is the purpose of me sending you, Jeremiah, is that if you speak these words to my people, then perhaps they will hearken unto me and turn from their evil way and then I can revoke the sentence.

And so he prophesied these words. Right there in the house of the Lord, in the court. And the people heard it.

The priests heard it. They told the king about it. And some of them wanted to put him to death.

And then rose up certain of the elders of the land and spake to all the assembly of the people saying, Micah the Morestite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah and spake to all the people of Judah saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field and Jerusalem shall become heaps. And the mountain of the house is the high place of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and besought the Lord and the Lord repented him of the evil which he pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

So Micah prophesied that. The very same prophecy. Jerusalem shall be plowed as a... Zion shall be plowed as a field.

Jerusalem shall become heaps. And it is in the days of Hezekiah. Hezekiah sought the Lord, called the people to repentance and the Lord withdrew the prophecy.

We find that prophecy in the book of Micah. The Lord relented. He revoked the prophecy.

Years later it was fulfilled as his people continued on or went back to their old ways and turned away from the Lord. Then later on, God fulfilled it. But right then, God revoked it.

And so these people encouraged. They encouraged the people there who had assembled together against Jeremiah. They said, Now let's beware of what we do.

Remember how Micah prophesied the words of the Lord concerning the evil that was to come to this nation? How they repented and God revoked the sentence. Now take heed, he said, lest we bring evil on ourselves and harm Jeremiah. So you see, the purpose then of the gift and the ministry that God has given his people is to exhort his people, to encourage them in the ways of the Lord, to draw them from their evil way, to draw them unto the Lord, if so be that God can then cancel that prophetic utterance of judgment which he thought to do unto his people.

And so we are confronted with all these situations that arise from time to time in order that God might bring forth in our lives and in our being, in our nature, this characteristic of a priest. It's one thing to have the vision. It's another thing for the Lord to work in our hearts the necessary grace to make us priests before God.

Joseph had a vision. God's plan was that God would work in his heart such grace and mercy that he would be a true priest on the throne. In order for that characteristic to come forth in Joseph, he had to submit to all kinds of merciless dealings.

He had to be sold by his brethren into slavery. He had to be cast into prison. And this was bringing forth this heart of mercy in Joseph.

You see, mercy isn't something that just comes into your heart and you say, Lord, give me mercy. And then the Lord gives you a gift of mercy. We're talking about divine nature.

Divine nature is not a gift. It's a work in the hearts of his people. You can have all the gifts of the Spirit and still be carnal.

Still be carnal. You say, why do you say that? Because the Corinthians had all the gifts of the Spirit and Paul says you were carnal. You say, well, what's the use of having gifts? There's no use of having them

unless we allow them to work in our lives this nature that we're talking about.

No use of having them. Paul says the rain comes down from heaven and waters the garden, the weeds and the thistles as well as the vegetables. What good is it doing to the garden? It's doing good to the garden, but the thorns and the thistles are being watered with the same gift as the vegetables are.

That's why it's a fearful thing to partake of the gifts of the Spirit and the ministry of the Spirit and not to allow the Lord to work in our hearts the nature and the beauty and the compassion and the mercy and the longsuffering of Christ. It's a fearful thing because if that nature is not wrought within us, that beautiful flow of the gift of God, whether it's in prophecy and vision and dream and revelation, will just bring forth pride, obstinacy, self-sufficiency rather than the nature of Christ. So we mentioned how Joseph had to learn and how Moses had to learn, how David had to learn.

See, David was ordained to be king, but before God would allow him to rule and reign with authority, he had to subject him to the ostracism of Saul. He had to be exiled. He had to be persecuted.

He had to flee for his life. He had to come to that place where he cried out, Lord, no man cares for my soul, and the great depressions that he went through. All that was by way of preparing him so that when he came forth triumphantly, then he would be able to show mercy and compassion.

I remember years ago, I think I mentioned this before, how in the early days of my life, as I knew from early childhood that the Lord had a ministry for me, and so that became sort of a goal. And yet as I seek the Lord concerning it as a young man, on this one occasion for days or weeks, I guess it went on. This scripture would keep coming to me in various ways.

And now, oh man, what does the Lord require of thee but to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God? God was telling me in plain words that that's really all he wanted. But you say, what about then the vision of the ministry? Well, this is all he wanted, because if these characteristics are developed in you and I, there's a ministry there. But I didn't realize that.

I thought, well, I get a mighty baptism and a mighty gift of power and maybe great visions and revelations, dreams and see angels, and then I'd have a ministry. Now a man might have all that and have a ministry, but he might have all that and have a great ministry and still fail in the purpose that God has for his life. The characteristics of God's priest are not developed within him where he can have compassion and show mercy.

You might say throughout the whole church system, the principle of sacrifice is emphasized. You hear it in any church you go into? Sacrifice. First of all, with your money.

That's the main thing. Give your tent. Now, I'm not saying it's the wrong thing to give a tent.

We haven't emphasized giving here because it's been emphasized enough. In any church we've been in and come out of, that's always been a great emphasis. You know all the teaching on it.

We're giving a greater emphasis because there is a greater emphasis in that. And Jesus said, the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy, they're more weighty than these other things. They're more weighty.

Jesus told the people of his day, go to the Scriptures and you'll see God declares, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Yet, sacrifice has become the cornerstone, you might say, of all teaching in the church. Sacrifice your money.

Sacrifice your time. Sacrifice your sons and daughters. Send them to mission fields.

Let them die as martyrs on some mission field. So sacrifice, sacrifice. And God says, there's something more than sacrifice that he's after.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. That's what God desires. And it's very important that we learn this principle now because when God comes forth and manifests this kingly, priestly authority of power in his people which we know he's going to do, unless we've learned these attributes, it will be to our own downfall.

It will be to our own downfall. That's why it's very important that these principles are firmly established within us. We can have compassion on the ignorant, those that are out of the way because this priest also is compassed with infirmity.

He knows the potential for evil that there is in his own life. He knows the potential. He knows how easily he might have fallen.

He knows how many times he has gone astray and how God, as it were, just caught him, as it were, took him as a firebrand from the burning and set him on the right way. And therefore, as he sees others going astray, he realizes, Lord, I would have done that. I would have gone this way.

But Lord, you sheltered me and you protected me and you grabbed me as a brand from the burning when I would have gone my own way. And the Lord having reminded us of these things, having done these things for us and wrought in our hearts that mercy and compassion, then when we see others going that way, we can say, Oh, Lord, don't do it. Don't allow it, Lord.

I blot my name out of the book. Now, it seems almost unthinkable that a man could pray that prayer. One scholar pointed out that according to the grammatical structure of it, it didn't imply that there was a consistent yearning in Moses' heart to be blotted out of the book of life or in Paul's heart when he said he could wish to himself a curse from Christ for his brethren's sake.

But he claims according to the grammatical structure it was something that came to him with a great emphasis at a certain time, but not something that lingered. You could hardly imagine it could be something that you could day by day and moment by moment say, Lord, blot my name out only if your people are spared. But nevertheless, that great heart came upon him and he said, Lord, let me be a curse from Christ for my brethren's sake.

You see, he became a true priest and therefore he was able to reach his brethren. So we're members of the body of Christ and members in particular. Members in particular.

If one member suffers, other members suffer with it. I know when I suffered with this back condition a couple of years ago, and I felt there was some, you know, well, he's off on the wrong tangent. He's got false doctrine.

So now he's suffering. And I did suffer. And so I can feel somewhat for others who have suffering of this kind.

I'd never known it before. I'd never had physical suffering in my memory, I mean to speak of it, for any prolonged period of time. And so all that, you see, it sort of ties into your experiences.

You receive it as from the Lord. And personally, when things come like that, I like to examine my heart. What is the reason, Lord? But when it comes to someone else, God causing others to suffer, I don't have that attitude.

I seek not to have it. I seek not even to think. I wonder what you've done wrong.

Rather, I would choose to think this way. Lord, what have we, as members of your body, done wrong? As this trouble was coming on me, I was walking down the street quite crippled, and I met this carpenter friend, and he says, What's wrong? I says, Oh, this leg of mine. I can hardly walk.

He says, I think it's your back. Oh, I says, nothing wrong with my back. I says, it's my leg.

Oh, he says, you go to the doctor, I think you'll find it's your back. He says, I've had that trouble. I went to the doctor, back trouble.

I never had one bit of pain in my back the two months that I was a hopeless cripple. I never had one bit of pain in my back. But he said it was a back condition.

I accepted his word. He took x-rays. It's a vertebrae in the back and so forth.

But my leg was suffering. And so I choose to take this attitude. If my brother is suffering, if my brother is going astray, Lord, is it my fault? Is it the fault of the members of your body? It may not be his fault at all.

And may God cause each one of us to take that attitude. And so will this body that God is forming in the earth have great concern one for another. And what a glorious day is awaiting the body of Christ when no longer will you have to have individual concern for yourself.

I mean, that's the way it is. Insurance for myself and Social Security. Everything, the whole system is based on security.

Because I'm a lone individual in this big wide world and I've got to look after myself. As you and I become vitally members of the body of Christ, instead of having you, your own individual self, concerned about your welfare, you'll have every member of the body of Christ concerned about you. With the same concern that you would have for yourself.

The very same concern that you would have for yourself. If there's a group of 50 people, now I must look after myself. As we become vitally joined together in the Spirit, you'll have 49 others vitally concerned about your welfare.

Isn't that tremendous? So we'll triumph together and we'll be defeated together. Joshua was defeated before his enemies. Joshua had walked with the Lord.

Joshua, who had been chosen by the Lord to lead the armies of the Lord to victory. And his soldiers were killed in battle. And the army was defeated.

He fell on his face and said, Oh God, what's going on? What's going on here? They told us to go in against the enemy. Now they're fleeing from their enemies. What's wrong, Lord? And by evening time, when Joshua had repented enough, God says, Stand up on your feet.

Israel has sinned. That's why they're defeated. What did I do wrong, Lord? No, it wasn't you, Joshua.

It was Achan. I mean, it took a while for that sinning member to be revealed. But it wasn't Joshua and it wasn't the men who were killed in battle.

It was Achan. But God was dealing with them as one holy nation, a corporate people, a body. See, that doesn't seem fair.

Well, the inheritance that they came into, they could only attain to in relationship with their brethren. It's the only way they could attain to it. So why shouldn't they suffer if their brethren suffered? And this thing that we're going into is something that no individual can take in himself.

I know there's heights in God that you can attain to as an individual, but it's mere nothing compared to what God has for you and I as we come into union with the body of Christ and go in as a body. And therefore, in the meantime, we seek that relationship, we seek that fellowship as the Lord brings it to pass. But we also have to remember that even as we seek this glorious fellowship, we must share and bear the burdens one of another and be true priests of God, having compassion on those who are ignorant and out of the way because we ourselves also are compassed with infirmity and subject to the same tests and temptations as everyone else.

So may the Lord bless this word to our hearts this afternoon.

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