

# Levitical Ministry - Part 2 of 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*Levitical ministry is about association with God in His work, representing God's people in holiness, and serving God in a purified people.*

**Duration:** 45:11

**Topics:** "Ministry"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having an undivided heart for God. He explains that sooner or later, if we are truly committed to God, we will be confronted with the need to align our lives with His will. The speaker uses the example of Levi, who represents the principle of the undivided heart, to illustrate this point. He highlights the need for believers to be conformed to the image of Christ and to have a wholehearted devotion to God in order to effectively serve Him.

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## Transcript

Prophecies of Malachi, Prophecies of Malachi, chapter 1, verse 11. From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the nations, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering, for my name shall be great among the nations, saith the Lord of hosts. Chapter 2, verse 4. Ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant may be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

My covenant was with him of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear, and he feared me, and stood in awe of my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and uprightness, unrighteousness was not found in his lips. And he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity.

The priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. Chapter 3. Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. The Lord whom ye seek will suddenly come to his temple, the messenger of the covenant whom ye desire.

Behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who can abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appeareth? He is like a refiner's fire, like fuller's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver.

They shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness. Continue with the matter that the Lord brought us to face this afternoon, this matter of what is represented by the Levites in the Old Testament. And again, may I say what has often been said here, that we, in all these things, are dealing with spiritual realities, and not just the forms of their embodiment and presentation.

When we speak about Levites, naturally think of an Old Testament order and system of priestly ministry. But we need constantly to remind ourselves that whatever God has done, however he has expressed himself from time to time, in the history of this world, all the different forms and means of expression are only means of conveying spiritual and abiding eternal realities. And that is very true of the Levites.

We are speaking about them, we use their title, but let us realize all the time that we are in the presence of great divine spiritual realities that belong to us and to our time as truly as ever they belong to any people of God. So that this spiritual law of the Levites, if something comes right into this very hour, into this very place tonight, we could not hope to comprehend and cover this whole matter, even though we were here for days. I am not attempting to do that only to lift out some of the most vital elements in this whole matter.

Let us then begin by clarifying our minds on this one point, that we are dealing with a spiritual conception, and not with a formal ecclesiastical system, and we speak of priests and Levites. That latter does not obtain in our dispensation, but the spiritual conceptions do govern this dispensation. Now when we try to get to the heart of this matter, right to the very heart of it, asking ourselves this question, what is the innermost and deepest meaning and significance of this whole matter of Levitical ministry? I think the answer is association with God in His work.

That is a very simple way of putting it, but it is tremendously deep and souchy. Association with God for His work. We have to bring up before ourselves all that the Word of God reveals as to the nature of God.

And if we were to put the nature of God into one word, surely we should have to say holiness, holiness. You might say love, but love is governed by His holiness. Love is qualified by His holiness.

It is holy love. Whatever other word you may use to describe or define the nature of God, you may say truth, many other things. They are but the expression of this innermost thing, His holiness, His holiness.

And association with God. That is a tremendous thing to contemplate. In this book of Malachi's prophecies, it is that that is governing, is dominant throughout.

And the one charge that the Lord had against the people there and then was that they had lost a sense of His holiness. So much so that when they were charged with certain most conspicuously wrong things, they said, how? How? Couldn't see it. Couldn't see it.

They had lost the sense of His holiness. Then He brings them to the point. Is those you offer on my altar the blind, the lame, the blemish? Then He puts it like this.

Don't offer that to your governor. See what he'll say. What will he say? You dare to offer me a blind sheep, a lame, a blemished animal? Who do you think I am? What sort of a person do you think I am? See what your governor would say.

But am I not greater than your governor? Yet you do it to me. See, the Lord has startling ways of bringing people face to face. I'm only using this by way of getting at this whole matter.

Association with God. Just think of it. The Levites were called into association with God.

That was God's covenant with Levi of life and peace. Think of it. Come right into touch with such a God as He is.

Come right into touch with His things. Before Him. And live.

And live. Why? It would be impossible to live in His presence of life and peace. In touch with such as He is in peace.

Why? There would be war unto the death if there were not a right foundation, basis. My covenant was with Levi of life and peace. In association with me in my work.

I'm trying, dear friends, I know so imperfectly and falteringly, to impress you with the greatness of this vocation. If it is true what we were trying to say this afternoon. This is not a special cult or class or denomination of people.

This is what the church as a whole is called into. And when the church as a whole fails the Lord, He looks inside to find those who will not fail Him in this matter. He's done that again and again.

And that is the history of the Levites. Now let's go back. And all the knowledgeable people will be patient.

Well, everybody here hasn't got all the knowledge that you have. What happened with the Levites? Well, first of all, you know what we read this afternoon. How they came into view with the Lord at all.

The time of the golden calf. The breaking loose of the nation. And Levites separating of themselves from that corruption and pollution and taint.

Standing right outside of it. And then at great cost. To their own souls and family and friends taking the sword.

Against this breaking in of evil powers. Well, that's how they came into view first of all. You know that later the Lord took the tribe of Levi in the place of the firstborn sons in Israel.

The firstborn son in every household was the official priest of the household. He functioned as the priest of the household. When Israel departed as a nation.

And there was not that which the Lord required in priesthood in the whole nation. He separated the tribe of Levi on the basis of the half shekel of silver. And made the tribe of Levi representative of all the nation.

As the church of the firstborn ones. Representative that is in the Levites now all the families of Israel are represented. But represented in holiness.

In satisfaction to the Lord. A people in the midst of the people. Giving God his satisfaction.

For he must have it. You are familiar with that principle. I am not going on with the history of the Levites.

You can pursue it. There is much more. That is enough for us to get right at the meaning of this.

This law of the Levite is the law of the innermost association with God. For the work of God. In a priestly way.

We say that. We mean mediation. Intercession.

Standing between God and his people. To bring them together. To mediate from God what he wants his people to have.

To bring his people into touch with God and his resources. It is a spiritual thing. And in that sense you are all called to be priests and Levites.

You are wondering. You are saying this is very technical. Very ecclesiastical.

But no it is very simple. There is a piece of work going on in Denmark just now. Which is growing.

Expanding. Very all amounts. But very real.

Movement of God. For ten years. Five sisters.

Not by any means young. Certainly not influential in this world. Poor in the things of this world for ten years.

Those five sisters. Prayed this thing into being. Not till after ten.

Lonely. Patient. Years.

With much heartbreak. And disappointment. Coming to the place where sometimes you wondered whether ever anything could be.

The end of the ten years. The thing broke. I call that Levitical ministry.

It was hidden. The world knew nothing about it. Went on.

God knew all about it. You may be a lonely soul in some place. You may be a lonely little group in some place.

You may be larger. But whether alone. Whether in larger greater companies.

This thing is. This is what you are called to. To be God's Levites in this thing.

To stand. Not between him and the world. Yes that.

But. Between him and his own needs in and purpose for his own people. That's a vocation.

Which was the vocation of the Levites. And dear friends. If you need impressing.

With the importance of that to the Lord. There's not something. That is.

Well optional. That is extra. You can take it or leave it.

Let me take you back to what I read to you. From the first chapter of Malachi. Do you not see the link.

In my Bible. I've got lines. Drawn across the pages.

And those lines link things up. And I read to you in chapter one. My name shall be great among the nations.

And in every place. Incense shall be offered unto my name. And a pure offering.

For my name shall be great among the nations. My line. Runs across to Levi.

First. To the covenant made with Levi. And then from there.

The purifying of the sons of Levi. I believe that's the right kind of link. You see it.

That if his name is really to be great among the nations. He needs a Levitical body after this kind. He needs a people.

Within his people it may have to be. That is not his appointment. Originally.

He would have all his people. On this basis. As representing.

The church of the first born God. If the whole is not like this. As we have said so often.

He looks inside. For those who will. Serve him in this way.

But. The. The purpose is.

His name great among the nations. Let's put it round the other way. If the Levites.

Are corrupt and defiled and out of their place. The name of the Lord is dishonored among the nations. If the Lord has not got this kind of thing.

That he needs this ministry. By such a people. The nations suffer loss.

And the name of the Lord suffers loss. See the Lord here brings it right back here. The reproach.

The reproach. On the Lord from the nations. His dishonor.

He focuses right down on the Levites. Right down. And in order.

That the reproach. On the name of the Lord should be removed. And that his name should be great among the nations.

He must purify the sons of Levi. Now you see. We begin here.

Association with God. Let's take that to ourselves individually. I can think of.

Nothing more searching. For me. To have association.

With God. Well of course it will depend upon my idea of God. Won't it? But if I have any.

Any right conception of God. The kind of God he is. His infinite holiness.

Association with him. You are allowed to come near him. Come into his presence.

Proximity to him. That's a tremendous thing. That's a tremendous thing.

We should think it a great thing. We were allowed to have association with some people in this world. High honor.

And a responsibility. For them to bring us into association with them. Think that a great thing.  
Association with God. For his work. His work.  
He do his work by us. So we need. God grant.  
It may be one of the fruits. Upshots of this time. This very hour.  
A new conception. On the one side. Of the holiness and greatness of God.  
Shall we say the awfulness of God. And on the other side. The infinite.  
Infinite. Mercy and grace of God to call us into association with himself. What an honor.  
What a privilege. He will do his work through us. Oh we dear friends.  
Haven't got a right conception of God's work. Take it into our defiled hands. Yeah.  
Project ourselves into it. Spread ourselves over it. Try to become something in it.  
Strut about. So we were something. When Isaiah saw his holiness.  
Holy, holy, holy. And he cried woe is me. I'm undone.  
This we need to recover. And then. To realize.  
He calls us. Into that association. And.  
For the purpose of fulfilling himself. His work through us. I want to pause there.  
And put in brackets something. When we. Speak on this matter.  
Holiness and sin. And unrighteousness. And.  
Perhaps. Begin to feel. Something.  
About it. And ourselves. It is just possible for us.  
To wrongly call to our rescue certain scriptures. Wrongly call to our rescue. There is therefore.  
No condemnation that are. To them that are in Christ Jesus. And wrongly take the covering.  
Of that scripture and such like scriptures. And hide behind them. There is a difference.  
Shall we continue in sin. That grace may abound. God forbid.  
See the point. Oh yes. We'll always be very imperfect.  
Always be much to be done. In us to the end. In cleansing.  
Sanctifying. And saving. It's got to go right on.  
And if we walk in the light. As he is in the light. We have fellowship.

One with another. That is. Himself and ourselves.  
The blood of Jesus Christ. His son. Goes on.  
Cleansing us. From all sin. But there is such a thing.  
As not walking in the light. And excusing it. By saying.  
Yes I'm. I know I'm very imperfect. And I'm a sinner.  
But there's no condemnation in Christ. You see what I mean. Well.  
You can't. We. We can't.  
Get away with that. These people in the churches. In the revelation.  
The seven churches. Those where there was wrong. When.  
It was mentioned to them. They're wrong. Thou hast there this and that.  
And the other thing. Which thing I hate. They might have said.  
But there's no condemnation. For them that are in Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ.  
Cleanses us. That won't do. That won't do.  
If we are going to really. Be in association with God. For his work.  
The refining powers. Of God to do their work. And the sons of Levi.  
Must be purified. We must be a purified people. We must be walking in holiness.  
We must. With all the value of the precious blood. Cleansing.  
The Holy Spirit. Sanctifying. We must.  
Be walking in the light. And we must. Correspond.  
To the Lord. For association. It is the effect.  
It is the service. It's service that. Takes preeminent place.  
Here as you see. Israel was called. Out of Egypt.  
To serve the Lord. Let my son. Go.  
That he may serve me. The whole idea of God. In sonship is service.  
It's practical. It's to do his work. It's to minister to him.  
And that in the midst. Of the nations. Israel was called out.  
From Egypt. To serve the Lord. On the basis of sonship.

When the whole nation. Showed. It's weakness and it's defilement.  
It's divided heart. Half. Toward the land.  
And that. Very largely it. Became clear.  
For their own. Game. And the other half.  
Back in Egypt. And that. For their own.  
Convenience. And comfort. And that was all.  
Dragged out into the light. The Levites were taken. As the people.  
Of an undivided heart. That was the test. You see.  
Moses said. That put every man his sword. Gird every man his sword on his side.  
And go in and out. Slay your own brother. Your own.  
Family. And your own friend. No man of a divided heart.  
Could undertake that. Man's heart. Must be whole.  
To be able to do a thing like that. They were really put to the test. About this.  
In a very practical way. And they stood up to it. They went through with it.  
They therefore. Right in the very center of the nation. Represent.  
The principle of the undivided heart. The heart that is holy. For the Lord.  
That is essential to association with the Lord. That is essential to. The thing that the Lord calls.  
His service. Not what man calls. The service of God.  
The work of God. But what God calls. His service.  
And Mark you. Dear friends. It is true.  
Solemnly true. That sooner or later. Sooner or later.  
If we really mean business with God. If we are honest with God. Sooner or later.  
We'll be brought up against this. We may have gone on for a long time. Doing a lot of things for the Lord.  
And a lot of work for the Lord. With. Things that the Lord.  
Did not agree with in our lives. But sooner or later. The Lord says.  
We've gone. Far enough from this. Now then.  
And at that time. All. Our.

Life. Work. Is coming.

Either to an end. Or there's going to be. Something new.

And something more. It's the crisis of our. Testimony.

And the crisis of our work. That's what Levi represents. You see.

It's just that. That's what Levi represents. You see.

It's just that. God looking on the heart. God looking on the heart.

Oh. Forgive me if I seem. Too.

Heavy. Severe. But.

I think the Lord. Is after something. What I'm keeping my eye on.

Is. Not. The process.

But. The outcome. I'm quite sure the Lord wants to do a new thing.

A mightier thing. A thing for his glory. That he has purpose in view.

Something more. Something more. And as I see it.

This Levitical principle. Is just that. How God will go on.

And how God will. Do greater things. And do more.

And reach his end. And it is with him that overcometh. That is the Levi.

Of our time. The Levi. Stood and stand for.

What is most precious to God. Most precious to God. And what is most precious to God.

Is holiness of life. You can't dispute or challenge that. All this.

Book of Malachi. These blemished offerings. These lame.

And blind offerings. Lord said. Away with them.

Away with them. I've no delight. No pleasure in your offerings at all.

Take them away. These. Blemished things.

Give me no pleasure. No preciousness in those to me. It's what is most precious to the Lord.

And unblemished. See. Unblemished.

Thing that is whole. Before. The Lord.

What is. Most. God is jealous.

Very jealous. He's a jealous God. See.

In one sense. God is the only person. Who has.

A right to be jealous. Our jealousy is all wrong. All wrong.

But. God's jealousy is a holy and a pure thing. And he has a right to be jealous.

He is jealous. For his name. Jealous therefore.

For his holiness. Now do you. See.

Do you recognize. That. All this.

All this. Explains the Lord Jesus. All this explains the Lord Jesus.

It explains his coming into this world. It explains his life while he was here. It explains his cross.

It all explains the Lord Jesus. We said this afternoon. That he is.

The. Great Levite. He commenced.

His ministry at the age of 30. As the Levites commenced theirs. He is the great Levite.

Here you come to your whole matter of sonship again. Sonship. Unto.

Service. To satisfy God. Here is one.

Who is. In the closest association. With God.

If Christ. The point is. If Christ is.

Our example. And if. We.

Are. Foreordained. To be conformed.

To the image of God's son. If. Christ really.

Governs. Everything. In life and work.

And here we are. We are in the presence of one. Whose.

Heart is. Not divided. Whose heart is.

Holy and utterly. Forgot. Whose association with God.

Is complete. And absolute. Mark you.

By his own choice. We are not thinking now. Of his identification with God.

In God's head. Thinking of him. As the Levite.

The man. Representative. Amongst the Lord's people.

One. In real association with God. One.

Fulfilling. The purpose. And doing the work of God.

I must work. The works of him. That sent me.

Or we must work. The works of him. Sent me.

While it is day. Here is the perfect Levite. Now.

What's the point? In order. In order. That we.

We. May work. The works.

Of God. We must be conformed. To the image of God's son.

We must come. Into Christ likeness. Now you see.

That opens your whole Bible again. Because. From beginning to end.

Whenever God. Has taken a step. In the history of this world.

Whenever he has taken a step. And every successive step. Of the numerous steps.

He has always taken that step. On the basis of Christ. You seen it? Did he take a step with Abel? Was Abel a step? Well it's not difficult to see.

The feature of Christ. That Abel represents. One who is separated unto God.

Whose heart is undivided. Where God is concerned. And so we could go on now.

But you see. Every step. With every new man.

Man. In the beginning. Every new man.

Abel. Enoch. Noah.

Abraham. Swan. Came.

To the people. Of Israel. Came to the Levites.

And on you go. Every step that God took. He took on the basis of Christ.

God has never moved on any other ground but his Son. You and I. Will be outside of the movements of God. If we are not moving on the line of Christ.

And Christ is this all comprehending Levite. Who has a heart only for God. Who at any cost.

Any cost. Will prove that his heart is holy for God. And.

He will react. Violent react. Against any insinuation from the enemy that would take something from the Father.

Follow that. The Levites did that. When they took the sword.

It was a violent reaction. Against a breaking in to take something from God. That's Christ.

So that. Being called into fellowship with God's Son. Is being called into.

A Levitical position. Of absolute separation unto God. Whole heartedness for God.

Reaction against everything that would take from God. And dishonor his name. And all the rest that the Levites stands for.

Now I trust that you are. Catching the truth. Of course.

The idea. The data is too much. All the details.

Too many. To cover. This ground.

But. Here we are. We are.

We are faced with this. The Lord would take new steps. The Lord would go on.

The Lord would lead his people on. But his way has always been. All times.

To find. Either a man. Or a people.

Of the Levitical order. Like that. He's got that.

He can do something more. He can go on. He needs that today.

And he needs that. Everywhere. We need not all be together in one place.

For that. We're scattered over the earth. But the principle.

Of holiness unto the Lord. Principle. Of the undivided heart.

Principle. About. A jealous.

Red hot. Jealous. Reaction.

Against. Any. Touch.

Of corruption. From the enemy. The Lord will come along that line.

He. He cannot do this willy nilly. I think you know.

We've had too cheap an idea. Of the Lord's service. And of our relationship to him.

Too cheap. It's just too easy. Anybody will do.

Anything will do. Generality. Oh no.

If this says one thing to us. It says no. No.

Not at all. God is jealous. And God is jealous.

For his holiness. And for his name. May he write that.

Put that into our hearts. Just explain himself what he means. By speaking to us in this way.

So much is at stake. My name. My name.

Great. In all the nations. I'm sure that appears to our hearts.

We pray.

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