

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Smithers:

Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Church has been called out and anointed to be a kingdom of priests. This royal priesthood is much more than merely a religious title. Through the blood of Jesus the believer has not only been forgiven, he has also been given God's unmerited power to live in holiness. As a royal priesthood the Church has been especially set apart and equipped to love and worship Jesus with a pure heart.

A Reasonable Sacrifice

1 Peter 2:5, 9 outlines the Christian's priestly calling. "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, His own special people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." It has been said that were there is no sacrifice, there is no priesthood. Verse five refers to God's holy priests offering an acceptable sacrifice. What is this acceptable sacrifice? Romans 12:1,2 tells us. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." A consecrated life set apart for Christ's sake through faith, is the sacrifice God desires and accepts.

Notice that the scripture declares that this sacrifice is reasonable. The sacrifice of a holy life is never to be esteemed as harsh and unreasonable. Such a life is the only natural response to the unfailing love of Jesus. A sacrificial life of obedience is what every true follower of Jesus longs for and desires. Sad to say, this is not the case in many of our most popular churches. Many who claim to be devoted followers of Christ cannot bear to even be reminded of God's command, to be holy . Among others the message of holiness, at best, seems only to be tolerated. I'm afraid there are many who desire priestly power and position and yet shun priestly purity. It is impossible to have the one without the other, they are two different sides of the same divine coin. Without the imprint of purity, one is left deceived, cheated and impoverished. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14).

The Crown of Holiness

In Exodus 28 is found a list of the garments the high priest was commanded to wear. Each one of these priestly garments are full of types and metaphors that can instruct the New Testament believer in his holy calling. From head to toe the high priest was clothed in the finest linens, jewels and gold. Chief among all of his royal garments was his crown of mitre. The mitre was a turban to which a gold plate was attached by blue cords. On this plate or crown of gold was engraved the words, "Holiness unto the Lord." (Exodus 28:36-38). This mitre was to continually rest on the forehead of the high priest. Like the high priest of old, the new covenant priesthood needs to continually have holiness engraved on the forefront of their thoughts. A true priest never grows weary of hearing the Father's call to holiness. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Another metaphor of the believers need to continually be reminded of holiness is found in Deut. 11:18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." In this passage God commanded the children of Israel to continually lay up His law in their hearts. As a sign to remind them of this they were to tie small leather compartments to their foreheads and hands. These small compartments contained portions of God's holy and eternal law. Again the symbolism is clear, God's people should always be reminded of the Father's heart cry for holiness. Holiness should always be before our eyes. Who can argue that in these days of perversion and lawlessness that the standard of holiness needs to be continually raised? Why then do so many professing believers still regard holiness as something unpleasant and offensive?

The Beauty of Holiness

The Scripture declares that holiness is beautiful. (Psa. 96:9). Exodus 28:2 states that the priest's garments were made "for glory and for beauty." Yes even the crown of holiness was to be regarded as glorious and beautiful. To despise the beauty of holiness is to despise the beauty of Jesus Christ. If you do not consider perfect

holiness as something beautiful and desirable, then you have either confused TRUE holiness with the doctrines and traditions of men, or you have become deceived by your own rebellious heart! Holiness is not merely a list of external duties; no, holiness first and foremost is a heart issue. To be holy is to be exclusively reserved and set apart for the love of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. It means being separated from the world, pure and chaste as a betrothed virgin. The Church has been called to be a secret garden, sealed and prepared for the Savior's delight. (Song 4:12-15). Jesus desires the Church to be pure for His own sake. Is it unreasonable that Christ should expect as much from the Church as any husband would from his loving bride?

The State of The Church

Brethren the modern Church is not suffering today because She is too holy and strict. No, the Church is suffering because She has opened Her doors to unclean and deceiving spirits. From the pulpit to the pew, many of our modern churches have brought grief and shame to the heart of Jesus. Not since the Dark Ages has the Church suffered so much because of Her own ungodliness. In times past newspapers reported the victories of the Church's most anointed evangelists. Today the newspapers report the perversions of the Church's most popular preachers. It is time to once again welcome the preaching of holiness in our pulpits. Jesus is waiting for us to yield to His heart's desire. All the provision has been made through the cross of Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ we can abundantly enjoy the daily experience of holiness in bridal love. By God's GRACE we can be, and must be HOLY. "For the GRACE of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous for GOOD WORKS." Titus 2:11-14.