

## THE CALL TO PRIESTLY HONOUR

### ~Other Speakers G-L: Allan Halton:

The writer of Hebrews addresses a “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3.1). It’s the calling to participate in the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose priesthood is after the order (or, model) of Melchizedek. That’s why it’s a heavenly calling. The Levitical priesthood was an earthly priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood a heavenly.

Now, there is only one high priest after the order of Melchizedek—the Lord Jesus Christ. The heavenly calling is to become a partaker of His calling—to be a king and a priest in union with Jesus Christ.

This is a very high calling, and very demanding. It means making a certain Sacrifice by which we have said good-bye to our own interests in all things. It’s always God’s own interests that the priest is to be preoccupied with.

The Hebrew for priest is kohen. Years ago I wrote a note into my Bible that says, “The word kohen is believed to be derived from kahan, a form of kun, the Hebrew for to stand. Thus, a priest is one chosen by God to stand before men on behalf of God, and to stand before God on behalf of men.”

I used to dwell on that a lot. Which of the two is the greater? To stand before men on behalf of God? I have to confess I liked that idea... and would imagine myself standing importantly before the people in God’s stead delivering a message from God.

But what about standing before God on behalf of men? It’s this that the writer of Hebrews emphasizes.

For 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 is compassed with infirmity (Heb. 5.1,2).

That’s the first thing on the mind of the Holy Spirit. A high priest is taken from among men and is ordained for men, or, on behalf of men, in things pertaining to God.

And—this is the important thing to see—it is God Himself who wants a man who stands before Him on behalf of men. It’s easy enough to see that men need a priest who stands before the terrible God on their behalf. But do we see that being a priest who stands before God on behalf of men... this is what God Himself wants? For God is love. This is His heart.

What are the qualifications of such a priest, then, and the preparation involved? There’s much to this, of course, as detailed in Leviticus Chapter 8, which we won’t go into just now. The writer of Hebrews singles out just one thing. Compassion. Other translations have this as “gentleness,” or “forbearance.” The ESV has, “he can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.”

This is why God chooses his priests from among men. They too are beset with weaknesses, so they are able to identify with the failing.

These (the failing) fall into two categories—the ignorant and the erring. Some simply don’t know any better; it’s easy enough to be gentle and forbearing with such. But what of the erring ones—those who know better, and are still at times “out of the way,” wayward, erring, struggling in their walk with God?

The one who knows his own heart and who has “been there, done that” will remember his priestly calling in cases like this as well. He will be standing before God on behalf of this one as well... interposing himself on behalf of this one, and making intercession.

For, this is what our great High Priest had done and is Himself doing—He whose calling we are to be partakers of. He interposed Himself on our behalf, laid down His life for us, took upon Himself our infirmities, became our sin offering—our sin. Now He sits at the right hand of the throne of God, the place of all power in heaven and earth, where He can have compassion, deal gently, with the ignorant and the erring. I like how the Greek has it. It’s more than just a feeling. He “is able (Gk. dunamenos), that is, has power to deal gently...” In other words, His compassion is effectual, is vital, has power in it. And nothing is able to break that power. He abides our High Priest continually. As a result:

He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7.25).

I love that emphasis, and am personally so thankful for it— to the uttermost. For I see things in my own heart that make me despair at times. But I take courage. He that has begun a good work in me wants to complete it... and is able to complete it... and WILL complete it! He is at the powerful right hand of the throne of God making intercession for me...

...And for others as well. And He calls me to join Him in that same intercession for others. Sometimes it's not all that easy to hear His voice when it comes to that; some of these "others" can be very trying. But it's a priestly honour to do so, if we can receive it. That's what the Holy Spirit calls the priestly calling—an honour.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God... (Heb. 5.4).

Yes, of course, we recognize it's an honour to stand before men on behalf of God, and many there be who seek this... failing to recognize only the called are authorized to do so. But the writer of Hebrew is reminding us that it's just as great an honour to stand before God on behalf of men.

Do we hear His voice calling us to this honour, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling?