

Roy's Sermon for August 8, 2021

1 Peter 2:5 'The Royal Priesthood Of God!'

Last week we looked at 1 Peter 2:5 in a sermon I called 'Hungry Souls: And Living stones'. After exhorting us to rid ourselves of those five characteristics of self-obsession: "malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander," he says, "like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." I explained that what we feed upon spiritually is far more important than what we feed upon physically. One has consequences for only a moment in the scheme of things, while the other has repercussions which last for eternity! The warning for us is that if we feed ourselves upon such things as those five wicked attributes, then our eternal outcome will be the same as the father of all such things, the devil!

So what we need to feed upon, what we need to "crave, like newborn babies at their mothers breast," who need to be fed every few hours, is that pure unadulterated spiritual milk of the word of God! Like breast milk, it must be "pure spiritual milk." Unadulterated, untainted by the twisting's and poisonings of those who would lead us astray. "Test every spirit," Paul said, meaning the spirit behind every teaching. If it is of God, it will come straight from His Word! And the goal is, Peter explains, that "we grow up in our salvation." We are not to be as malnourished children stunted in our growth. A child at the right time needs to be taken off the breast and given solid food. And so too it is, in the things of the Spirit. Having "tasted that the Lord is good." Yes the things of Christ are good. They are nourishing and sustaining for this life, and for the eternal soul!

We saw that when David was on the run from Saul he behaved like a madman, believing his survival lay in his own hands. And yet God in His mercy still delivered him. So he too could write in Psalm 34 "taste and see that the Lord is good." Yes we have all "tasted and seen that the Lord is good."

And finally, v4-5 that "Jesus is the Living Stone." He is not dead because He lives. And being born again in his image, we too are "living stones." Being built into His spiritual house, his church. Yes stone by stone through us, He is building his church!

And so we pick up the letter 1 Peter 2:5 'The Royal Priesthood Of God!' So having just said that "you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house," he also says in v5, "to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Friends if you remember, I explained last time how everything about Judaism revolved around the temple. Animal sacrifices were constant. And in Jesus' day, it had fallen into being all about traditions and ancestry. All about their Jewish heritage. Yes it was about building, traditions and law keeping. So much so, that those things had taken the place of heartfelt faith, and the service and worship of God! But the church is not the building. It is the people inside the building. Not those dead stones of the structure. But those "living stones" who are the people. Yes the Jews loved their traditions. The temple had been being built for 46 years, and wouldn't be finished until 46AD.

But Beloved, one thing I didn't touch upon last time is that we are "a holy priesthood, making offerings that are acceptable to God through Christ." Yet what does this mean for us today? What does it look like for us? Is it speaking about special people who wear collars turned around the wrong way? Who wear special clothing. Have polished cups to drink from. Even long flowing gowns, and who possess those special places to sit within those buildings? Behind closed doors to hear confession, and give absolution for sins? Yes even those people who are above the rest of us? But for us to answer this question properly, we need to examine the birth of the Biblical priesthood. Where it all began. and to do this we must turn to the book of Exodus!

Most of you know the background. After Joseph was sold into slavery by the treachery of his jealous brothers, he rises to be governor, second in command to only Pharaoh himself in the great land of Egypt! Then God announces that a famine is coming on the land. And Joseph becomes the great deliverer of Jacob's extended family! Well for 400 years the Israelites grow in number. The evil Pharaoh is raised up by God and then He delivers His people out of that land of slavery through the Red Sea, until they come to Mount Sinai.

And this is where it all begins! Exodus 19:16-20: "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain." Exodus 2:1, "And God spoke all these words." So in the hearing of the people God speaks the Ten Commandments. Then in v18-20 of Exodus 20, we have the people's response to God's Voice. This crowd of some 2 million strong. Safety in numbers, we are told. Well not in the presence of God! "When the people saw the Thunder and the lightning and heard the trumpet, and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us we will die'. Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'

Friends, we have a different view of God today don't we. But it's interesting, as I have said many times, God hasn't changed! On the contrary, He is by nature and character unchangeable. No it's just that our assessment of Him, continues to diminish. Yes we have in our minds of ignorance, dragged Him down to be where we are. God is my mate! But no, "God has come to test you to keep you from sinning." Brethren, every opportunity to sin is a test. To pass or fail, depends upon where we are getting our strength from. Or perhaps more importantly, from whom!

Well in chapter 24, Moses Joshua, Aaron and his sons with 70 of the elders go up to a designated place on Mount Sinai, and they get a mind-blowing revelatory vision of God. Exodus 24:9-10 "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 elders went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against the leaders of the Israelites. They saw God, and they ate and drank." Now this is significant because the Israelites were prohibited from coming up the holy mountain under the threat of death. God had given strict orders to Moses to set up boundaries at the mountain, that no one may come up or, "breakthrough," the scripture says. This image of God which Moses and the others saw is very similar to that of Christ and the throne of God in Jesus' revelation to John. Again, God hasn't changed! His mercy extended to the elders and the others.

And what did they do? They sat down and ate, in the very presence of God. King David wrote in the wonderful Psalm 23:5: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou annointest my head with oil my cup overflows." It is that picture of victory and rest in the presence of God, isn't it. Well in Exodus 24, we get a window into that very thing. And this feast and this seeing of God, is all the more remarkable, because in chapter 33, when Moses asks to see God's Face, The Almighty replies, v18-21, "Then Moses said now show me your glory. And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But, he said, you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. Then the Lord

said there is a place near me where you may stand on a rock, when my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen." Yes "No one may see me and live." Remember, prior to this in chapter 20 we read, "Moses speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." And now they are sitting down in the very presence of God and having dinner!

Friends, clearly, we can see that God's desire is to be merciful. And we will soon see, how merciful this act was! So Moses and Joshua leave Aaron and the others in charge, they go further up the mountain, they wait for seven days, and then God calls them upward. But crucially, in light of what will soon take place, we need to know these words of the people. Exodus 24:3 "when Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, everything the Lord has said, we will do." V7: "Then he took the book of the covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said, we will obey."

Beloved, I want you to remember these words, "We will obey. We will do everything the Lord has said." V17-18 of chapter 24 "To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud, as he went up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights." Brothers and sisters, I can't get my head around it. What faith it must have taken for Moses to enter that "consuming fire." We know fires in Australia. We all know them. But "the consuming fire" of the glory of God, we can only imagine. And then to walk into it? May I suggest, he could do this only because of three key ingredients. Firstly, his faith in God. Secondly, his love for God. And thirdly, his love for the people of God. And we shall see, that this love is unquestionable!

And now the idea of priest before God is first mentioned. Exodus 28:1 "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests." But while Moses is up on that mountain with God, and he is receiving all of those regulations about Israelite life, and the specifications about the Tabernacle which would soon be built, and the priestial duties, and garments for their service, we all know what happens next!

Chapter 32. The people, after declaring on earth that they "would do all that God had said. We will obey," get sick and tired of waiting for Moses. That one whom God used to bring them out of the brick kilns of Egypt. But in reality, they were sick of waiting for God! Exodus 32:1 "when the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said: "Come make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt. We don't know what has happened to him." And notice v2: "Aaron answered them, take off the golden earrings." V4. "He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "Here are your gods O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Friends amazingly, Aaron doesn't know it, but God has, chosen him as priest. Even the first high priest. And yet what he is doing here? Just as all false priests do. He's leading the people astray! V5 He builds an altar. And declares tomorrow there will be a worship service. V6, They sacrifice offerings to the golden calf, sit down to worship, eat a meal. Then they get drunk, and get up to descend into sexual debauchery and depravity. And yet only weeks before, they had on earth declared, "We will do all that the Lord has said. We will obey." And the 70 elders with Aaron and his sons, who had sat down in the very presence of God and ate that blessed meal. Where are they?

Why do we not read of them crying out, this must not be done. We have seen God. And this is not Him!

O Beloved, how clear it is that as soon as we take our focus off the God of the Bible, and we listen to the whispers of Satan, anything can happen! And all this is taking place, while Almighty God is announcing Aaron's priesthood to Moses. But friends, this shouldn't surprise us. Why is our nation in such a mess today? Because the voices of the "salt and light of the earth" are silent. Like those 70 elders and Aaron, many have lost their voices and worse still, are in effect going with the flow of the depravity of our day. But Beloved, the problem is that Jesus said in Mark 8:38: "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his father's glory with the holy angels." Has it not been rightly said that for evil to abound, good people must do nothing? Well that's what's happened at Mount Sinai, and that's what's happening in Australia today. Sadly on the whole, concerning so much of that which is being forced upon us, the church and its preachers are silent. But friends for such silence, there will be consequences!

Exodus 32:17-24: "When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp". Moses replied, "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat, it is the sound of singing that I hear". When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you lead them into such great sin?" "Don't be angry, my Lord", Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, "Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him". So I told them, "Whoever has any gold jewellery, take it off." They gave me the gold, I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

Did you notice Moses' words and Aaron's reply? v21 "What did these people do to you that you led them into such great sin?" Did they torcher you? Did they threaten to kill you or your family? Look at Aaron's answer. "Do not be angry my Lord. You know how prone to evil these people are." 'They brought their trinkets to me, I was afraid for my life, so I threw them into the fire and up popped a golden calf! Where is the confession of wrongdoing? Where is the admission? Where is the contrition? No. Only out and out lies. And him having sat down at the table of God in His presence. 'I was being pressured. I threw the stuff into the fire and up popped a calf.' As if by the Hand of God Himself!

It's that pattern of the original sin, isn't it? It is always everybody else's fault and not ours. O friends, how often, (even over and over each day it sometimes feels,) is the pattern of the original sin evidenced in our lives? After the first sin, God comes looking for Adam. He's caught out because he knows he is naked. God asks him how did he know he was naked.? "The woman you put here with me." Adam says. God finds Eve and she says, "The serpent deceived me." "What did these people do to you that you led them into such great sin?" Moses asks. "You know how prone these people are to evil", Aaron says.'

Beloved, as with Adam and Eve in the garden, did God not know what was going to happen while Moses was up on the mountain? Well of course he did. Why then did He permit this to take place? Why didn't He send Moses down earlier to prevent this evil? Well I can only suggest, that it is because He is showing us the inherent nature of our sin and need for grace. While we see also His mercy and His righteous justice, and what righteous anger looks like! V19 "When Moses approached

the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire. Then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.” 31:25-29 and I read: “Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughing stock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, whoever is for the Lord, come to me. And all the Levites’ rallied to him. Then he said to them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Each man strap his sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbour”. The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about 3000 of the people died. Then Moses said, “You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day.” So the Levitical priesthood was born that day, out of righteous anger for the honour of God! Jesus Himself did the same thing when he cleared the temple of the money changes. Unlike Aaron and the 70 elders, the Levites feared God rather than men. They would stand, live and die for God. For His Name. For His Truth, in the face of this worst kind of abomination. Bowing down to that which their hands had made, while the glory of God thundered in their ears, from the top the very mountain of God! Yes the biblical priesthood of the Levites’ was born that day, through their zeal for the Name and the Holiness of God. And like Moses, the fear of the abomination that such things were to the surrounding nations!

But again, in answer to the question that I started with this morning: What does this look like for us today? Well before I answer that question, I want to take one more look at Exodus 32:9-14: “I have seen these people”, the Lord said to Moses, “And they are a stiff necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation”. But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God. “O Lord”, he said, “Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, it was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce anger, relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self, “I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever”. Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.”

Beloved what would we call that which Moses does here, as he petitions God on behalf of the people? Look again at the words of v10, perhaps some of the most terrifying words of the whole of the Bible: “Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I make destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.” The idea that the anger of God had to be left alone to reach its full measure is terrifying! God is saying that ‘I am going to annihilate the people. Then I will make you into a great nation’. Do you understand the implications of these words? My plan of redeeming a people for Myself will still come to pass Moses, but I will do it through you. V11 “But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God.” God had been saying these are your people. But Moses stands between God and the Israelites and humbly but boldly reminds Him, that these are Your people O Lord! Can you see that Moses truly is a priest. Truly is a servant to the people? God is in effect anointing Moses as the future but he rejects this by saying no Lord, these are Your people.

Brothers and sisters, the true priest of God, the true shepherd, is all about the flock. That's what a true priest is: The servant and protector of the sheep! Revelation 1:5b-6: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a Kingdom and priests to serve his God and father, to him be glory and power forever and ever, Amen.” Notice it doesn't say to be a Kingdom *with* priests. It says to be a “Kingdom *and* priests.” Clearly the implication is then, that we

are all priests! Yes we are all priests. Servants of God who are called to minister to His people. We may have different roles but we are all priests!

Speaking of Jesus in comparison to the Old Testament priesthood, the writer of Hebrews puts it this way. Hebrews 8:12 "The point of what we are saying is this. We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man." Jesus is the great high priest who serves in the heavenly sanctuary. We are His underlings who serve God here. He has offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. So we now offer ourselves as Romans 12:1 "as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God."

But how are our lives, our sacrifices, made holy and pleasing to God? 1 Peter 2:5B Only through Jesus Christ! Dear friends; We are the holy priesthood. Set aside by God for service to Him in this life. We don't sacrifice lambs goats and bulls as they did in the Old Testament. No. Again, Romans 12:1: "Therefore, I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship." Jesus was both Priest and sacrifice. In a sense, we are called to be the same!

Let`s Pray!