

## A New Order of Priests and Levites

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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“And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.”—[Isaiah 66:21](#).

THIS chapter is surrounded with critical difficulties, and yet it is full of spiritual instruction. The verse before us is by some referred to Gentiles, and supposed to mean that the Lord promises that he will take out of the heathen nations a people whom he will make into priests and Levites. Others would say it points to the Jews, rejected for their unbelief and dispersed in judgment among all nations. When their own Messiah came, it was not with a devout faith, but with a profane imprecation, they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” The curse they invoked did come upon them. The retribution they challenged has been meted out to them in full measure. To the letter it was verified. Have you never read how, when Titus was besieging Jerusalem, five hundred Jews were sometimes crucified in a day? Do you not remember that Josephus, speaking as an eye-witness, said, “*There wanted room for crosses, and crosses for bodies*”? To this day their children are scattered in all lands, and have found no rest for the soles of their feet. But they are to be restored; they are to be brought back to their own land, and to worship God in his holy mountain; and in the latter days, when they are restored, then will God take of them for priests and Levites. To me it appears of very small consequence to which this verse refers, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision; and this promise seems to me to stand good to the whole human race considered in its fallen state. “I will take of *them* for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” Under the gospel dispensation God will select both out of Jews and Gentiles a chosen people, who shall stand before him spiritually as the priests and the Levites stood before him typically.

Think for a minute of the compass of this great promise. Evidently a high honor is here conferred. The connection leads us to see that not only a great promise but likewise a great privilege is herein implied. What is this privilege? It is that we shall be priests and Levites. Now, the priests or Levites were persons set apart to be God’s peculiar property. When the firstborn were spared in Egypt, God claimed the firstborn to be his own, and he took the tribe of Levi to represent the firstborn; they were to be the Lord’s. Though all Israel belonged to God, yet the tribe of Levi was especially selected and particularly appointed to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and of this tribe of Levi, chief among them the house of Aaron, to minister in the sanctuary as priests. So now, glory be to God, he takes out of all nations a people that are to be peculiarly his own—his own by election, as he chose

them—his own by redemption, as he bought them—his own by endowment through the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;” his own, therefore, before time, and after time shall close. “I will take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” Being thus set apart as the Lord’s property, the priests and Levites lived only for divine service. While others were engaged with their trade or upon their farm, the Levites were attending to the tabernacle or temple, and the priests in their courts were slaughtering bullocks and lambs, and offering them to God; or they had other duties of a kindred order, by reason of the charge given them of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel. Anyhow, it was in sacred things that they were occupied; so now, it is the duty of every man to serve the Lord; but, alas! man will not; and therefore God takes unto himself a people out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and he ordains them to stand before him continually, to wait on his commands, and to do his bidding. Thus he puts upon their shoulders his easy yoke and weights them with his light burden, and they become his willing servants—that their life may be for his glory, and that their desire, as well as their duty, may be to serve him with heart and strength so long as they have any being. In this sense, then, happy is the man who is set apart to the divine service, a priest and a Levite unto God.

Further than this, the priests and the Levites enjoyed the privilege of drawing near to God—nearer than the rest of the people in that typical dispensation. While the people stood without, the Levites are busy inside. One of them, the chief of the tribe, and the High Priest before the Lord for all the tribes, was permitted and commanded to go into the most holy place within the veil; and you know that the holy places made with hands are figures of the true, even of heaven itself. In like manner there is a people to be found on earth at this day whom God has chosen to draw near unto him. In Christ Jesus they who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The same precious blood that is applied to their conscience is sprinkled on the mercy-seat; therefore they have access to the Father. Oh! happy they, who, like the priests and Levites, love dwelling in the Lord’s house, and praising him, who can say—

“Here, Lord, I find settled rest  
While others go and come;  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations: we are a people near unto thee made nigh by affinity with the Son of God, brought nigh by the blood, led nigh by the Spirit of God, kept nigh, and rejoicing to be nigh—for herein is our honor and comfort, to be near unto God; made priests and Levites, because claimed as God’s portion, prepared for God’s service, and admitted to a near familiarity with him. There are some such to be found in this place to-day, whom God has taken from among the Gentiles to be priests and

Levites unto him. But priests and Levites had two works to do: something to do towards God for men, and something to do towards men for God. They were engaged to do something towards God for men, and so they offered the sacrifices that were brought to the door of the tabernacle, whether according to the general ordinances, or to any special vows. Spiritually minded, they were much engaged in intercession for the rest of Israel. So there is a people to be found this day who offer unto God acceptable prayer and praise, and in answer to their prayer, unnumbered blessings come down upon the sons of men. I trust there are some here that have power with God in prayer. Ye are the king's remembrancers; ye make mention of his name, and keep not silence; ye cry to God for Sodom, and yet more hopefully ye cry to God for Jerusalem: your prayer ceaseth not, and God's grace and favor always follow it. In this sense God is constantly taking out, even from amongst the vilest of the vile, a people whom he makes to be priests and Levites for men towards himself. Another part of their office consisted in speaking for God to the people; "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge." As for the Levites, they were as ushers in the schools and tutors in the families of Israel. Amongst the Levites were found those scribes who became the instructors of the people, the copyists of the law, and the expounders of its statutes and ordinances; ministers who opened up to the people, as Ezra did, the knotty points of the old covenant, and expounded the word. So not all of us in the same degree, but all of us in a measure, are to be teachers of God's revealed truth, even as he has taught us; and he has in this place, and throughout the world, taken out a certain company whom he has made to speak as his mouth to the sons of men—men of his own choosing, and his own sending, who are as priests and Levites for his name. They claim no priestly office as though they could absolve the sinner: they leave that with Christ, the firstborn of his Father's house, and the chief rabbi of all the Lord's chosen seed, but as teachers and instructors; they are in the midst of the world the priests and Levites of God. I have thus shown what the promise means. God will take out of the Jews and Gentiles a people whom he will bring very near to himself, and make use of for his own sacred purposes. The great point is this. It seems to be mentioned here as a matter of surprise that God should take any of them—of the persons here mentioned—of the sinful, backsliding, transgressing Jews, or of the blinded, dark, benighted, heathen Gentiles—that he should take *them*, and make them to be priests and Levites before him. Now, that is parallel to the fact that God does take some of the most unlikely persons, who seem to be the most unsuitable of all, and make these to be his faithful and honored servants among the sons of men.

Now, I shall first notice *that fact*; then, *the reason for it*; and then, *the lessons from it*.

I. First, I notice that God does, to the astonishment of men, TAKE SOME WHOM HE MAKES BE PRIESTS AND LEVITES TO HIMSELF. This is a fact. How, there are priests and Levites that God never took. There have been such in all ages. There were those in the days of Aaron who said: "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi;" and when they stood

before the Lord with their censers, “the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up.” There were those in the days of Elias. When he stood by the altar of the Lord, the priests of Baal, in great numbers, stood by their altar, offering prayer to Baal. Ye know how God had no regard to their sacrifice. They were the church established by law; but, for all that, Elias the Nonconformist, put them to the rout, and maintained the worship of the invisible God of Israel firm and faithful to the end. So in our Savior’s days there were priests and Levites—men taught and instructed in the law, and these were the very men who conspired together against him, who took counsel how they might put him to death, and who stirred up the people to say, “Not this man, but Barabbas.” And on down to this present day there are those legitimate priests and Levites—at least, those who call themselves so—whom God hath never taken, upon whom he hath never laid his hand, upon whom his Holy Spirit hath never descended; who speak, but he speaks not by them; and who administer ordinances, but he gives not grace to the ordinances by their hands. And such there always will be, doubtless, till Christ cometh, but they are not spoken of in the text, for the text says, “I will take,” and it is only those whom God himself takes and chooses among men that are the real priests and Levites that serve him.

Observe, according to the text, men have nothing to do with the selection; for here it is said, “I will also *take* of them”—not “their parents shall bring them up to it;” not “those who shall be looked out as the most fit and proper men on account of some natural bent and bias, or gift and talent, but I will *take*.” God’s priesthood in the world is a priesthood of his own choosing of his own setting apart, of his own anointing. “He hath made us kings and priests unto God.” The church is a royal priesthood, not of man, neither by man, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth: it is of God’s choosing. This sacred and consecrated band of priests and Levites, and all that serve God effectually and acceptably, are men whom he has himself chosen to the work. He himself hath done it, and only his own will as been consulted in the matter. In their case, it appears from the text, that whatever was unfit in their character has been overcome by divine grace. “I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” If God takes them for Levites, he makes them Levites; if he chooses them for priests, he makes them priests. So, glory be to his name, when he chose you, my dear brother, when he chose you, my dear sister, to be his servants, to be his priests and his Levites, he gave you the grace you wanted. He found in you no natural fitness, no suitability, but in fitness for sin, a suitability to go astray, and to become a brand for the burning; but if there be a fitness in you to serve him on earth and in heaven, it is his grace that has done it. It is his grace speaking in all its wondrous majesty—“I will take of them for priests and for Levites”—which has effected in you the great transformation, making in you all things new, and thus qualifying you to become the servants of the Most High. In some persons this natural inaptitude and unfitness for the Lord’s work has been more apparent than in others. They have been men of rough exterior, unhallowed life; their education

neglected, their passions wild and lawless, their tastes low and grovelling; yet, for all that, God has taken from amongst such men some who in an especial manner, even beyond the rest of God's servants have become as priests and Levites unto him. He has sometimes selected women, in whom there seemed to be no suitability for his grace, to make them matrons in the church; and men, who seemed to be ringleaders in the service of Satan, to make them very captains of the Lord's hosts. They had no inbred faculty, no natural genius that qualified them to become the instruments of righteousness: as I have said before, it was the reverse of this. Their career was not foreshadowed by any instinct with which they were born; nor was it aided by any training they received in childhood. The God who chose them gave the grace they required at their second birth, and subdued all the evil that was in them by the rich discipline of his spiritual operations, in order to qualify them for efficient service. I thank God, I do remember in my soul some dear brethren who have been made eminent ministers of the gospel, of whom, if any one had said they would ever have preached the gospel, none would have believed it. Not to mention the living, the men of to-day, go back to the early days of John Newton, an earnest preacher, a famous evangelist, not to add a sweet poet. Almost a model for the ministry was John Newton, but once a blasphemer and injurious. Turn farther back, to John Bunyan, on the village green, with his tip-cat on the Sabbath-day, with all a drunkard's vices and sins, and foul-mouthed in his profanity: yet John Bunyan becomes an eminent proclaimer of the gospel, and the author of a matchless allegory which has served to guide many a pilgrim to heaven. Turn farther back, to Luther, most earnest as a Romanist for all the letter of the law, diligent in every ceremony, superstitious to a high degree, yet afterwards the bold proclaimer of the gospel of the grace of God. Turn to Augustine, in youth of corrupt and vicious propensities, according to his own confession, to the grief of his mother Monica, yet called by sovereign grace to be one of the fathers of the church, and a notable exponent of sound doctrine. Look yet farther back to the apostle Paul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, like a huge wild beast, making havoc of the church, but suddenly struck down, and almost as suddenly raised up a new man, and ordained (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father) to be a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name unto the Gentiles. "I will also take of them," the most unlikely and unfit, according to human judgment. "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites unto me." And where the service has not taken the form of preaching, we can remember some whom God hath made eminent in prayer. Never account prayer second to preaching. No doubt prayer in the Christian church is as precious as the utterance of the gospel. To speak to God for men is a part of the Christian priesthood that should never be despised. Surely I have heard some prayers of those whom none would ever have expected to pray, such as I have not heard from those who, from their youth up, have been accustomed to the language of devotion—moved with energy and full of fervor, like Elijah. Or, shall I say it, they have become in spiritual force

nerved as Samson was with physical strength. In their prayers they have seemed to take hold of the pillars of the temple of Satan, and pull it down upon their enemies; they have been so mighty as to wrestle with God and prevail. God has taken of them—that is, even of the prayerless, and the careless, and the blaspheming—and he has made these to be priests and Levites unto him. And in all other holy service I think I can recollect eminent men who out of weakness were made strong, from simpletons they were changed into sages, or, rescued from the dregs of infamy, they became paragons of virtue. In their unregeneracy as bitter fruit, apples of Sodom, that crumbled into dust and turned to ashes, yet so transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they bore the richest clusters of choicest fruit to the praise and glory of the Great Husbandman. “I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” There is the fact. You need not that I enlarge upon it. While a false priesthood still lives (and always will), God has his elect people, who are his royal priesthood among the sons of men, who are discharging regal functions and sacred offices among the sons of men in his name, and before his face; and these he oftentimes takes out from the least likely of mankind.

II. And now, secondly, as to THE REASON OF THE FACT. Does not he do this to display his mercy—his great and infinite mercy? that those who have provoked him to wrath should become the men in whom he should show forth his lovingkindness—men to be pardoned, men to be washed, to be sanctified—and then men to be put in trust of the gospel of Jesus Christ—does not this reveal and illustrate the high prerogative of sovereign grace? “Unto me,” saith the apostle, “who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” It is a great grace to be permitted to preach the gospel. I have sometimes said to you that when the prodigal came back to his father, and was received into his father’s house, no earthly parent, though he had quite forgiven him all the wildness of his son’s adventure, could wholly forget the waywardness of his disposition. He might condone the past without confiding in him for the future. If it were needful to send one of the sons to market with a bag of money, the good old father would, in all probability, say to himself, “I will send the elder son with it: he is better to be trusted; I would hardly like to put such a responsibility upon the young lad who has so lately been reclaimed.” I can fancy, without uttering a word to his younger son he would, discreetly (as you would say), trust the other with any weighty concerns. But our heavenly Father—oh, how he forgives us! He leaves no back reckonings, for though we used to be such sinners, some of us, and so injurious, after he forgave us, he committed to our charge not merely silver and gold, the perishable resources of time, but the priceless treasure of the gospel of Jesus Christ: he allowed us to go and tell to others “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” See ye not the impure giving, lessons on chastity, the intemperate teaching chastity? and mark ye not how he who persecuted the disciples in times past, now preacheth the faith he once destroyed? Oh, what deep mercy there is in Jesus! What wonderful grace

there is in giving his commissions, that those that cursed him themselves should intercede with him for others; that those that despised him should be permitted to honor him; that those who broke his Sabbaths should nevertheless be helpful to his people in hallowing the Lord's-day; that those who despised his word, and put it behind their back, should be the men to open it, and display the sweetness of it to their fellow men! Is not this grace? Methinks every time Paul preached Jesus Christ he would say to himself: "I used to call him the Nazarene; I abhorred him and used opprobrious language, but herein is great mercy, boundless mercy, that he should take me to be his servant, permit me to labor for his people and suffer for his sake."

Next to this, do you not think that the Lord loves to display his power? Men who are tamers of wild beasts, will frequently, when they have subdued a lion, take a delight in showing to the people how obedient that lion will be to them, and how every word that the lion-tamer chooses to say, it will regard and pay attention to. Thus, when the Lord takes a great sinner, after he has tamed him, removed his heart of stone, and given him a heart of flesh, he desires to show how, without the use of the whip, without a threatening look or an angry word, he causes his enemy to become his diligent servant, his earnest friend. O brethren, it shows the power of love on a man when he is so broken down that the things he sneered at he now preaches with all his might. Surely it showed the power of divine grace when Paul avowed Christ openly, and vehemently preached—exposing himself to persecution and death—that same gospel which his soul had previously nauseated; yea, which his zeal, full of bitterness, had kindled to exterminate. God takes great sinners, and then appoints and qualifies them to be priests and Levites, in order that he might show the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.

Again, does not God do this to show his sovereignty? Can we ever forget that attribute of the Almighty? Divine grace, while it comes freely to us, is dispensed freely by God, according to the good pleasure of his will. I should like to hear that text thundered throughout Christendom: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." No man hath any right to the mercy of God. We have all sinned ourselves into outlaw: all the rights we have are the right to be condemned, and the right to be cast into hell; all the rights of man that he can appeal to God for in equity are merged in the wrongs for which he is responsible. If the Lord have mercy, it is his own will to do it: he can withhold it if it pleases him; so he selects the most degraded, those that have gone farthest from him, and takes them into his church; nay, more, advances them into eminent positions of service in that church, that all his people may know that the Most High ruleth in the armies of heaven and Amongst the inhabitants of this earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" He lifteth up the poor from the dunghill, and setteth him among princes, even among the princes of his people. His mercy, power, and sovereignty are displayed when he takes of them to be priests and Levites.

But does he not thereby secure to himself the most loving service? I have sometimes thought (I hope I am not censorious) as I have observed with pain the superficiality of a great deal of what is called ministry in these days—that kind of superficiality, I mean, in which little is said about the corruption and depravity of the heart; little about the experience of the child of God when under the law; little, far too little, about the glory of that grace that takes such worms of the dust to make them one with Christ. I have often thought that this avoidance of, not to say this aversion to, deep ploughing, may be accounted for by the fact that the preachers themselves probably had not been suffered to go very far into outward sin; had never had any very deep law-work upon their souls; never had much awakening of conscience, nor felt much of the powers of the world to come. They got their religion very easily; and so knowing little of soul-humblings sensations themselves, they could not go very deeply into the experience of the children of God. When the Lord calls a grievous sinner, to make a gracious example of him, it is not so. The man who has done business in deep waters knows what sin means; tortured with a sense of his own crimes, he has been like those wretched culprits who surrender themselves to justice, because their conscience makes liberty chafe them. He knows what pardon means, for he has found peace after great bitterness, and got remission after the gnawings of despair; he knows what the conflicts of God's people are, for he has had many fierce encounters with the lusts that beset him within, and the temptations that assailed him from without. And now, when he opens his mouth, the testimony he bears is from an inwrought experience: he speaks of things which he has tasted and handled of the good Word of God. John Newton, to whom I referred just now, could not do otherwise than livingly and lovingly preach the Word of God. You could not have brooked from him a dainty essay or a flowery sermon, because nothing else would have consorted and accorded with his experience, but a faithful tale of the way the Lord had led him, and a forcible exposition of what the Lord had taught him. He had been such a sinner, that it must be grace which saved him; and he would have belied all his inward feelings if he had not proclaimed the grace of God. And so with Bunyan: if he had not tearfully wept over sinners and preached Jesus Christ in his fullness, as the Savior of Jerusalem sinners, he would have been opposing all that animated his own breast, and all that burned and glowed for utterance. God, therefore, takes some of these men who have gone far astray, that he might have warm-hearted, intensely earnest men, who must proclaim the gospel, because they have felt its power; who love much because they have had much forgiven; who preach of grace, because they need much grace, and lift up high the brazen serpent amongst the sin-bitten hosts of men, because they have been sin-bitten themselves and do remember it; they have looked and been cured, and they still remember the cure, and rejoice in it.

Another reason why the Lord takes the vilest of men to make them the saintliest is, that he might openly triumph over Satan. How the devil must feel defeated when such a man as Saul is taken straight away from persecuting to preaching! Surely, it makes Satan bite his

chains and gnash his teeth when he loses his servants so. Just when he has trained them up, and got them into fine condition for doing mischief, in comes the officer of divine grace, arrests them, and changes their hearts. You know none ever do the devil so much mischief as those who once did him service. They know the ins and outs of his castle—where to attack it. They understand so much of his devices and tactics, that they become all the more powerful adversaries when they are converted. All heaven rings with rapture when a great sinner is saved; and all hell howls with dismay when one of the arch host bows down to kiss the feet of Christ, and receive the mercy of God. Glory be to God when he takes those that would have been deepest damned, and sets them highest among the saved on earth to be priests and Levites unto him. By these means also he secures another end: he encourages poor penitents; for when a sinner, under a sense of sin, meets with a brother in Christ, who was like himself once, but is now living near to God and serving him acceptably, he is much encouraged. “Why,” he thinks to himself, “is this how God receives sinners when they turn to him? Perhaps he will receive me.” And if he gets into conversation with one of those whom God has made priests and Levites, he says, “Tell me what the Lord has done for thy soul.” And the minister being a man of like passions, and having had like experience, delights to describe the works and ways of God with hardened sinners and old offenders and then the man who is seeking finds in the other a guide who is touched with the feeling of his infirmity, is very helpful to him, and much blessed of God to enter into the secrets of his heart, and lead him to the cross. If there be here some great rebel against God, I think he ought to take encouragement thence to turn unto the Lord and live, for surely, when God so treats his most defiant enemies as to make them his most honored ministers, there should be some comfort for the great sinner to seek the Lord while yet he waits to be gracious.

And do not you think this is done very much for the encouragement of the church of God? I know, as myself one of its humble members I often need to be solaced by seeing what God’s hand can do. We ought to walk by faith, and so I trust we do; but when we see sinners converted, it gives zest to our fellowship and zeal to our enterprise. We all of us feel the happier for it. I hardly expect to see so many converts in the Tabernacle as there used to be. We have had so very many brought to God, that those of you who are left, I almost fear, have resisted overmuch the wooings and warnings of love divine. Indeed, there are so few comparatively left, that we have not the opportunities we once had when the mass of the congregation was not converted. Peradventure there are few of you whom God has not blessed. But I do long to see a fresh ingathering of converts: it would make my heart glad, and it would make all the church glad if we heard of some great sinners being saved.

I pray God sometimes that he would save a great multitude of the priests of the church of Rome and the church of England. Be did in the olden times bring a great multitude of the priests to believe the gospel, and why should he not yet again? If he wills to call to himself some of the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile, and make them wonders of his grace,

his omnipotent fiat shall be instantly obeyed. Why should he not? Why should he not? He has done so: why should he not again? He *has* done so, I say, and the text says, “*I will take of them for priests and for Levites.*” Why should he not go on to take from strange quarters still a people that shall serve him? Does he not say “*I will*”? Suppose it should ever come to this, as some say it will, that the churches, many of them, should desert the old truths, and the ministers become dumb dogs that cannot bark, and one by one their testimony should be silent, and every candlestick should be taken out of its place, and the whole head should be sick, and the whole heart faint, and Zion be under a cloud, and there should be none to help her, and none to lift up the banner for the truth? What then? Why, then God would arise, and take again from the fishermen in their boats new apostles, and from the lowest dens of iniquity, and the worst haunts of vice, from the saloons of frivolity where the rich resort, and from the chambers of commerce and the palaces of merchandise where buyers and sellers make their contracts, he would take a fresh staff of men. Out of the roughest material he can make the finest fabric, out of the newest recruits he can raise the noblest regiment, to show forth his praise, to do his work, and to secure victory for his cause. If some were unworthy holders of his vineyard, and brought him no revenue, he would put aside these wicked men, and send forth fresh laborers, and give his vineyard unto others, for he will get glory unto his name; he “*will take of them for priests and for Levites.*” Never say it is a dark day; never say God has forgotten his church; never give way to despairing fits, and dream of horrible times coming, that yet are not to come. Verily, “*all flesh shall see the salvation of God,*” and the glory of God shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. He shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion; he will build up her walls, heal all her breaches, and once again shall she be the joy of the whole earth. Take heart and comfort, God can find his servants anywhere. Omnipotence hath instruments where we see them not. He “*will take of them for priests and for Levites.*”

III. Lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM THIS? I address myself to those of you especially, my dear brethren and sisters, whom the grace of God has taken to make priests and Levites unto God. You are near to him: you serve him. What effect should this have upon you? First, remember what state you were in before God’s grace took you in hand. Then consider what you are called to be; you are made priests and Levites. Then ask yourself what you would soon become if his grace were to depart from you? Why, as you were before, only with this difference, that the evil spirit in you would take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than the first, and enter in and dwell there, and your last state would be worse than the first. Watch then, watch! watch! God, his grace enabling you to watch, will preserve you to the end. Am I a priest and Levite—a holy vessel set apart before God, serving at his altar, bringing prayers and praises to him? Ah! yes, I may be a priest and a Levite, but I should be a devil if his grace did not prevent. O watch, watch, watch! “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

And oh, *what humility* this vocation of God should produce! However high we may be raised, we must remember whence the honor cometh. For this promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west—it is God’s gift. Thou, a blasphemer and injurious; thou, a careless, godless, Christless man, now raised to be a servant of God, to wait in his courts, and honor his name, be thankful that thou art lifted so high, but wonder, and fear and tremble, for all the goodness that God has made to pass before thee. What am I, and what is my father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto; to pray and my prayer to be heard, yet not worthy to lift mine eyes to the place where thine honor dwelleth; to have thy holy Spirit dwelling in me, and yet not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof! Be humble brother: it will help you to watch. Watching is done best in a lowly manner.

And since he hath taken us for priests and for Levites, let us do every office *heartily* as unto the Lord. If others in this world can serve God coldly, yet, my brethren and sisters, you and I cannot afford to do so. We were such sinners, that if we have been forgiven, we must love him. Those that had little sin to be cleansed may not have much love to lavish on their Redeemer. Not so with me or thee:

“Love I most; I’ve more forgiven;  
I’m a miracle of grace.”

Those that had some good principles instilled into them by early training or some sort of preparation to receive the gospel, may not feel their deep indebtedness to the wonderful working of the Spirit; but those of us who were steeped in sin, and hardened in heart, when we are saved must magnify the power of God, and moved by that feeling we must serve him heartily with our whole spirit, soul, and body. A man that feels what grace has done for him cannot help throwing his whole soul into it. I used to know a man whom I often heard swear—on the other side of the river, in the town where I was—and when converted I recollect his prayers. They used to trouble us rather: they were so loud. It was not everybody that knew the reason why. He had been so accustomed to swear loud that he could not help praying loud; and when a man has been very loud for the devil, he cannot help being loud for Christ. Some of those dear Methodist brethren who cry out, “Amen!” so stentoriously, do it, I hope, because they feel the love of God in Christ on account of what great things have been done for them. Let those go the common track of service that have gone the common track of sin, but let those serve the Lord with all their heart, and mind, and strength, that have been unusual sinners. Bring your alabaster box, O great sinner, break it on his blessed head that pardoned you. Wash his feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head, for where extraordinary love has been experienced, extraordinary love ought to be the outgrowth, and extraordinary service ought to be the consequence.

Once again, if the Lord has taken of us to be his priests and Levites, let us serve him with great thankfulness and joy. If any people should be glad, I am sure it is those people that feel the aboundings of his mercy in forgiveness, having heard those glad tidings, as it

were, from the lips of Jesus himself. “Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee: go in peace.” They have something always to stimulate their gratitude and regale them with sunshine. “I am very poor,” saith one, “but, never mind, poor as I am, I am not a drunkard or a swearer now; I feel weak and sickly in body, it may be; never mind that; I have not the burden of sin upon my soul.” Or, “I am unknown, quite unknown. I have nobody to come and see me. Never mind that; I am known to God. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me. My great wounds have been healed in Jesus’ precious blood.” Why, you have always cause to be glad, my dear brother and sister, if you have had your sins forgiven: you have a fountain opened in your soul of love to Christ and joy in God, quite as surely as there is a fountain open for the cleansing of your sin in the side of Jesus.

So let me close, by saying, surely we ought to serve God with great confidence in him. If he has made us priests and Levites to him, why then we may trust him to do anything. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” He that has done so much for us, as to take us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put his gospel into our hearts, may be trusted for the rest. Suppose a man owed you ten thousand pounds and a trifling sum besides for a small promissory note he had given you; if he paid you the ten thousand pounds, you might trust him to meet the little bill when it fell due. And when the Lord has given us so much, so infinitely much, the little that remains—for it is comparatively little—ought to cause us no anxieties or doubts, no fears or misgivings. “Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.” He who found me a sinner, made me a pardoned sinner, put me among his children, and numbered me among his honored servants, has not done all this to desert me at last and put me to shame. He has not been at this expense with his poor servant to fling him away after all. No, glory be to his name: he will continue his work till he has perfected it. He is the God that performeth all things for me, and in him will I rest, and not be ashamed, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 66.