

## Priestly Perfection

Lessons from Leviticus 21

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We're seeing some things today in the church we haven't seen in many years. It's a new day we're living in. For some years, the Lord has been saying through me and many others, "There's coming a moment of judgment." I believe that moment is upon us.

In the late 1980's, we watched as noteworthy, respected ministers and international ministries fell into gross sin right before our eyes. These ministries were televised widely so just about the whole world watched in horror and amazement. Today, there are far too many *local pastors* falling for the same temptations (and more), but we're relatively unaware or uninformed because these reports are not hitting the national headlines. God is, however, exposing sin in His leaders. Judgment comes. God has warned us it's going to come: "*Judgment must begin at the House of the Lord. It's going to begin with leaders*" (1Pet.4:17). Judgment brings purification because God establishes His standard and measures our lives with it. That's what judgment is – a comparison of His plan against what's actually happening. And, I think we have only seen the tip of the iceberg – as God is testing His *Body*, not just the *leaders*!

When we see this happening, we become frustrated because it's so difficult to know how to respond. It seems to me that there are two extreme camps among *Charismatics* today just as there were in the 1980's. On the one side, we have those who say, "Forgive. Just forgive and forget. Let's treat the situations (there are more than one) like they never occurred. Let's restore, reinstate and forgive." On the other hand, there are those who maintain, "There are certain legalities God states in His Word for leaders. And once someone violates those, they remove *themselves* (or defrock themselves) in the sight of God in the ranks of being a leader."

God's people want to know "which is the right position?" I know I want to know. In this day in which we are presently privileged to participate – I'm pausing for that to hit your big toe. It's a privilege to be in the Kingdom of God these days because trust me, there is much for us to learn positively through all this. We have many, many things to learn – not the least of which is what *restoration* really means. We need to know what the Bible teaches us about restoration. Restoration and restitution are almost synonymous in meaning from both Hebrew and Greek. How do you "restore such an one" as the Bible tells us to do? (Gal.6:1; cf.1Cor.4:21; Lk.17:3,4; 1Tim.5:1,20)

First we'll focus on Leviticus 21 beginning at verse 16. Oh, that we would hear with deep understanding. The topic for us is "Priestly Perfection." Priestly perfection is discovered in the law but fulfilled in grace.

*"The Lord said to Moses [NIV], say to Aaron for the generations to come, none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of His God. No man who has any defect may come near. No man who is blind or lame, disfigured, deformed. No man with a crippled foot, a crippled hand, a hunch back, a dwarf, or any who has an eye defect or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. No descendant of Aaron the Priest who has any of these defects is to come near to present the offerings made to the Lord made by fire."* (Lev.21:16-21) This scripture would well fit one camp that screams against some things in the name of legality.

I think we need to understand that **priestly perfection, which is demanded in scripture, is not there for the purpose of separating priests from people, or clergy from laity.** If we do not see this accurately, we will never understand the New Testament teaching. You see, we really talk out of two sides of our mouths. Out of one side we say, "He or she is a *leader* (clergy, paid or volunteer church staff, or recognized leaders of ministries) and more is expected as a result." From the other side, we quote, "We are a 'Kingdom of priests' (Ex.19:6). We are *all* priests unto the Lord" (1Pet.2:5,9; Isa.61:6). So, which is it? Does God expect more out of the people we designate as *clergy*, or do we all stand equally accountable before Him?

I am extremely convinced that the next move of God is going to hit the pews in as great a dimension of power as it hits the pulpits. I believe that services are going to be divinely ordained of God – that He will set the order and content of services. As a result, I think during every service people are going to be saved, filled, healed, and delivered – **in the pews**. I think prayer requests are going to be made, agreed upon and answered – **in the pews**. I believe that’s what the next Revival will bring. Furthermore, I suggest that’s why pastors have been spending years or months preparing their people saying: “Get ready. Get ready. God’s going to do a new thing.”

But right now we are looking at some extremes. I beg you to be very careful that it does not become a diversionary tactic of the enemy to focus attention on an obvious failing and for us to refuse to deal with what needs to be handled. God ordains for us to see, to learn, to grow through such situations. He doesn’t just cause it (exposure of sin) to be so with no further divine purpose. He wants to use these things for us to recognize “There, but for the grace of God...” – and anyone who does not believe that is immediately bringing a revelation to all of his (or her) own arrogance or ignorance. God is not going to allow haughty hypocrisy to exist among His people forever!

“Well then,” you may ask, “*is the New Testament a violation of or a setting aside of the Old?*” When Jesus came on the scene, the Pharisees indicated that it was. Jesus had begun to preach *grace* and *love* and they objected: “Now look, You are violating the law. You’re breaking the law by healing on the Sabbath (i.e. Jn.5:8-10,16; Mt.12:10-14). You’re not supposed to work on the Sabbath.” Can you understand there has never been a day when the Church has been riper for a return to legalism than today?

Today, pastors as well as other people I meet everywhere, are relating a recognized need: “I need to *belong* to something. I need somebody *over* me. I need somebody to *hold me accountable*.” There is a kind of fear that has gripped the people of God today. “Just tell me the absolutes. I want to know what I’m supposed to do and what I’m not supposed to do and let’s just get back to that.”

There are also people, *leaders* of a sort, who are on the horizon ready to throw their hat into the ring to *lead* you into just exactly that set-up. They are eager to establish a hierarchy – under them – with the absolutes you think you want so you “don’t miss the mark.” Be careful – for in the very finding of them you will return to a *legalism* from which Jesus Christ set you free! (see Gal.5:1). We may look at that and cry out, “What’s wrong with wanting to be accountable? I really don’t know some things. I’m unsure of some things.” That’s your moment of judgment! We are accountable to God; our actions and behavior are directed by His Spirit who dwells within each believer. Our responsibility is to get to know *Him* and allow Him to write *His* law on our hearts (Jer.24:7; 31:33; Heb.10:16). “They that do know their God are going to do exploits!” (Dan.11:32b). He is – **God** is – going to have a church. Yes, a church “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph.5:27).

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “No, I did not come to negate the law. Yes, I did come to fulfill it!” (Mt.5:17). Now what does that mean? To some people that sounds like a lot of double talk. I assure you it is not double talk. What He said was, “I came to make it possible for individuals to fulfill the law and please the Father.” Praise God for that!

We are caught in a somewhat frustrating situation. It’s one thing to know what I’m supposed to do and quite another to be capable of doing it. God revealed that there are people, many committed Christian people, who are in bondage to something they hate. *That* is an enigma. You hate it – why do you bow to it? But remember, this is a moment of judgment. It’s a divine time for measuring – evaluating ourselves (1Cor.11:31) – and then a time to make choices. God has drawn individual circles – lines of demarcation – and placed individuals in them. Then He says, “Take a look for yourself. You judge your reaction to a scene.” So I say, “Okay, Lord. What is it You really want me to do?” He says, “Well, here – here is The Book. If all else fails, return to the recipe.” ☺ You’ll find My standard of measure in The Book.

The purpose of the Old Testament is to be there as a foundation upon which to build. So then, *when Jesus the Messiah came He would be the key to unlock the symbolism of the Old*. Did you hear that? Let's imagine: Jesus comes on the scene and some educated scribe walks up to Him and says, "Now, wait a minute. Are these Your disciples?" He answers, "Yes, they are." "These are going to be Your priests?" Again, "Yes, they are." "Ah, ha! Well, back in The Book it says there should be a perfection in them. It says there should be no blemish, no lameness, no flat noses. And, we can tell by looking, these men have these faults. They're not *qualified* to be priests."

Can't you imagine the Pharisees saying things like that about the disciples? I'm certain they did, just knowing how people are. "These are the ones You picked? Then, in other words, You're negating what You inspired to be written." Jesus' response was, "I'm not negating it, I'm fulfilling it." "Well, yeah, maybe," His critics deride. "But you've got Chicken Little over here and Sloppy John, and all these other motley people." But Jesus responds, "I know whom I've chosen. But I'm not through with them yet!" Hallelujah! Aren't you glad for that, Church? He's not through yet!

**What is it that's so important to the Lord?** What traits disqualify one as His priest? Let's study these things as listed in our beloved King James Version of the Bible.

**FIRST** – in Leviticus 21 it says, "*I don't want My priests to have **blemishes***" (v.18a). That simply means defects or spots. What's considered a blemish though, today? I think it is *unconfessed sin*. The only *spot* left in a believer is any sin that's not yet confessed and therefore not yet forgiven. The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from – what? ALL – "all unrighteousness" (1Jn.1:9). When I admit to my sin (or confess), "Lord, I am the one. I am guilty. Please forgive me, Lord, and cleanse me," the Blood of Jesus cleanses me from all unrighteousness (1Jn.1:7). We need this divine work for we cannot cleanse ourselves from sin. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission" or forgiveness (Heb.9:22b).

But there are many Christians today who refuse to recognize God's revelation of personal shortcomings as *God's judgment*. God does not judge believers the same way He judges unbelievers. When God judges an unbeliever, it's a final thing. He turns them over to the enemy (Mt.18:34). Oh, yes, that's true. That's why it better be God and not you doing the judging! (see Rom.2:1-3). That word had better honestly come from the Lord before you release one and turn them over to the enemy. Don't you EVER pronounce judgment on your own. It's a frightening thing when we usurp that from the Lord. Does that communicate clearly enough?

Here's the way God judges. He says to the believer-in-sin, "Fine, you don't want Me? You want to be full of blights and spots and all the rest of it. Fine. Serve your master." Then He turns to the Church and says, "Now, when they get enough of it, and when they come back after the enemy's buffeted them and all the other things he will do, you better have open arms." That's when the Church hates it! We don't mind it when they, those terrible sinners, get licked because they deserve it. But then, they come back to our doors and say, "You know God's revealed to me I have sinned." And we piously say, "Yes, you have."

We label our own blemishes as *personality traits* because we don't want to admit to personal sin! Or, we describe another something like this: "She is such a *pouter*. She goes into depression if things don't go her way. She just shuts down for weeks. Bless her, that's just her. It's *just the way she is*." God says that's a *blight*. It is sin to reject Him and His offers for help and healing.

Now Church, please carefully hear what the Lord is saying. I have asked Him for a change in every one of our lives – an eternal change. And I believe for it in me as well as in you. When He says, "I'm coming for a church without..." what? "*No more blight*." **The moment He reveals sin to you, you are responsible to deal with it.** "Well, but my mother was this way." So? She didn't deal with it either. This squarely facing the truth is not intended to encourage disrespect toward those who raised us. It is meant to remove our feeble excuses for not dealing with sin in our own lives.

I cannot accept some of the things I'm hearing in the Church at large today – that we're inheriting all of these negative things through our family lines – generational this and generational that. What do you think "born again" represents? I refuse to bring the negative things of my father's family or my mother's family into focus in my life or grant any sort of pre-eminence to them, except for as long as it takes to deal with them before the Father. I may have to "crucify" a few stubborn things in myself (Col.3:5; Rom.8:13; 6:13), but God enables me to do that. When I was born again, I was born into the family of God (Jn.1:12) and set free from any blights of my family of origin! I am a whole "*new creation in Christ Jesus*" (2Cor.5:17; Rom.6:4). It is up to me to learn to appropriate that reality. Furthermore, He gives us the responsibility to "put off" the old nature (Col.3:8ff; Eph.4:22, 25,26) and "put on" character traits that reflect the power of God in our lives (Col.3:10, 12ff; Eph.4:24).

The **SECOND** thing God says about His priesthood is: "*I don't want any **blind priests***" (v.18b). What is it the Bible says? "Without a vision..." what? "The people perish" (Pr.29:18). How many of you are like me and admittedly so, when you finally do see something about yourself – a blemish, a.k.a. "sin" ☺ – how many, having received that illumination or revelation from God, cannot fathom having been *blind* to it for so long? I do that often. I respond apologetically, "My God. Why is it I didn't see that 20 years ago?" His reply often is, "You would have denied it then." Can you relate to that?

It's embarrassing to admit to our failings, but *God knows exactly when to bring to light our areas of blindness*. He seems to bring them immediately following a song we sing like, "Take my life and let it be..." And He quickly responds, "Okay. Now, by the way..." ☺ How many of you have been having God deal with you this past year in ways that He never has before? It may even seem as if He's almost knit-picking – the "little things" in our lives He goes after. Large or small, they have been blind spots.

Have you noticed He is shining His light on every little attitude? I mean, God seems to be having greater difficulty with them than people do. ☺ Because we have people trained. They say, "That's just old Iverna. What do you expect?" But, never make such an excuse to the Lord! ☺ I explain, "Lord, it's just me. That's the way I am. What do You expect?" He says, "PERFECTION! 'Be ye perfect – even as...'" (Mt.5:48). "Oh, my dear God, *no one* is that *perfect*." But He contends, "I'll tell you why I dare to say that to you – because I intend to affect it in you too – because I AM." Oh, Hallelujah! I AM is like saying "ising" – God is continuously everything we need Him to be!

My friends, I promise you. Sooner than most of you believe, we are going to walk as Paul of old. And we will say, "None of these things move me (Ac.20:24). I am determined to know no one but Jesus Christ (1Cor.2:2). I am determined to preach nothing but Jesus Christ. If He tells me to do it, I'll do it. And if He doesn't, I'm not afraid of your faces!" We're going to be brought into this new place of expectation because we have become a part of God's family through the Blood of Jesus and thereby each has declared with our own lips, "I am a royal priesthood" (1Pet.2:9). God's response then is: "Alright, let's heal your eyes – no *blind priests*."

As we move along in each of these facets or categories (Lev.21), I'm going to show you how to minister to "marred" people. How do you minister to people with a blemish? How do you minister to the blind? And we will go into that. But you see, we can't minister to others if we're a part of the problem or have the same problem! And that's been the situation in the Church – we have been like the blind leading the blind (Mt. 15:14a). And when that happens, what does Matthew report Jesus concluded? "Both" – what? – "both fall into a ditch" (14b).

A person who swims upstream against the norm could be labeled rebellious. This may not make total sense to you at this very moment but I guarantee you, you're going to benefit from this understanding in the near future. We're going to see some people that are functioning successfully in ministry. And there will be others that God literally has apprehended for His divine reasons and purposes but will say to them, "That course is not for you," referring to a certain kind of "proven ministry." And they will respond obediently by reversing course to begin swimming upstream. They'll probably be labeled rebellious,

undisciplined, unwilling to be a part of the unity. But, they're going to be men and women with a true vision from God. Hallelujah!

Do you remember the time when the blind man from Bethsaida was brought to the Lord? (Mk.8:22ff) He was totally, absolutely blind. Couldn't see a thing. Jesus separated this blind man from the "sighted" ones that brought him by taking him out of the town (vs.23). (That would preach for about a month!) And when He separated him from the others, Jesus just reached over, spat, and touched the man's eyes, asking if he could see anything. And suddenly, the man could see – something. I can just hear him: "Glory! Glory to God in heaven! Glory! I can see!" Jesus said, "What do you see?" "I see men as trees, walking" (vs.24).

I've watched people that have been touched spiritually as that man was physically. "He that hath an ear to hear – let him hear." (see Mt. 13:9). Then they have walked around ever since with this testimony: "I tell you, the Lord has touched me! I just got saved, and now I see men – and they're all rootless and fruitless!

What do you think a *walking tree* would be? I think they're the ones in every church that the pastor tries to pray over to his neighbor: "God send them over there." ☺ "They don't like any body." Jesus says to the myopic man, "That's what you see, is it?" "Yes, that's what I see. But, I'm glad to see it because I didn't used to see anything, but now I see something." Jesus says, "Look up" (vs.25). The Scripture actually says Jesus "made him look up." He said, "You *need* to look up."

I believe that's the Word of the Lord to many of us today. "You need to look up. You've been looking down long enough. You've been staring straight across at people long enough. And all you have focused on was the blights and the problems in someone else." Jesus said, "Why don't you try lifting your eyes?" "I lift my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord" (Ps.121:1). He said to the once-blind man, "Look up." And when the man looked up (Selah!), Jesus touched him a second time. Oh, Hallelujah! The Bible says, "And he saw all men clearly" (vs.25b).

I heard a song some years ago, many years ago. I guess it never reached a realm of popularity because I haven't heard it more than a half-dozen times since. But it said, "Lord, You know I need another touch. My strength from yesterday is gone. If You'll give me now another touch, I'll have the strength to carry on." That should be our heart's cry! It ought to be the cry of the Charismatic Church today! "God, we need another touch! We're seeing things partially. We're so confused." What do we need? We need to have the Lord cause us to look up higher than we've looked and touch us anew with a refreshing – that we might have eyes to see as He sees.

**THIRDLY.** God says, "*I don't want any lame priests*" (v.18c). By implication, the word "lame" means, "a person who walks with hesitation." I think in terms of *people that are unable to walk straight*. I hope this doesn't come across as harsh or loveless when I describe spiritual lameness this way. And let's remember, we are all priests unto Him – so this is not prejudicial, but all-inclusive. I am tired out by this situation now so rampant in the Body of Christ. Please weigh this carefully with the Spirit and see the balance, will you? I believe the Lord is weary of the constant repeats of individuals who answer altar calls in service after service after service and remain unchanged – still walking with a limp. It's because they can't walk straight yet. We have more people in the United States of America calling themselves "born again Christians" today than in any previous period in history. We have more who even declare themselves to be "Spirit-filled, tongue-speaking, Bible-centered Christians" and yet our world has never been so distraught! How can that be?

There's a revival of evil going on again in the USA. Years ago, I read the book by Shirley McLain. It was representative of what turned out to be a great spiritual revolution – of evil. McLain made spiritism friendly and non-threatening. As I read, I became angry and angrier all the way through the book. I reported to friends, "You know what upsets me about this, is their use some of the very terms *we* use to describe how God flows through *us*. They're now calling this evil spirit activity 'channeling' and it

sounds so – credible.” And I added, “What scares me is that I see young people across our nation who have been searching for reality and solutions and this counterfeit will grab them.”

In the TV mini-series that followed, McLain tells of her search for truth and reality. In all sorts of sinful lifestyles, she concludes none contain her answer; not one satisfies her longings. In that search, she meets a kind of low-keyed but certainly successful, non-threatening movie star, who gently, step by step, leads her into what she labels “truth.” But I clearly could see the diabolical suavity used and that is what is so frightening. Hers was actually a journey into the occult. In the séance, though they never called it that, Shirley and the viewers are led to believe that great practical wisdom is found in this “spiritual experience.” She is enthralled. “This has to be reality!” she says, “because it’s supernatural.” Hang in there, Church.

There was a revival to evil in this nation, and it came in a different package than we had had it before. That was the subterfuge, the trickery, the deception the enemy used. And it worked. If they had said “spiritism” and “séance” and “witch” or “medium” and other such things, we would have identified it instantly: “This is nothing but the occult!” You better believe it! But new things were happening – with a new vocabulary – new for us. It opened the way to what we call New Age today, and it’s not really “new” at all! It’s the same old crooked walk up a crooked path. Today, when God says you’d better walk straight and make your paths straight and make the path of the Lord straight – He says so because no one who’s walking crookedly will make it.

There is another aspect of being lame: those who *hesitate*. There are always those who hold back. They say, “Oh boy! I think this is God but I’m just going to wait and see. I’m going to look at it but I don’t want to get too involved yet. I got involved before in a church and I was a member and in this thing and that small group and I supported almost everything – but I was so deeply hurt. I won’t get that involved in another church.” Have you ever heard that? I pray to God you weren’t looking in the mirror when you heard it! Jesus never promised we wouldn’t get hurt! He did promise to heal us – every time. And if you spend the rest of your life running from things that have hurt you, you’re going to run out of places to hide!

It’s not a day to falter, Church. It’s not a day to *hesitate* around everything you see in God until a more convenient time. Hear this – under God I promise it’s true. **There is an ability for you to do whatever you see in God – if you take hold of His faith and act on it.**

Jesus walked to a place in Jerusalem and saw a man who had been there 38 years – lying down, crippled, unable to walk (Jn.5:2ff). Jesus did not at once say, “Be healed.” He inquired, “Do you want to get over that problem? Will you be made whole?” (vs.6). “Well, let me tell You why I’m like this,” the man said. “The reason I’m not whole is someone else’s fault” (vs.7). How many in the church today claim the same excuse? “It’s someone else’s fault.”

The lame man explained, “You see, Lord, I don’t have anyone to pick me up and put me in the water when it’s stirred.” We say, “I’ve never had anyone teach me the right way.” Or, “I’ve never had anyone who believed in me.” Or, “I’ve never had anyone who delivered me.” “I’ve never had anyone tell me the truth.” Or, “God never answers my prayers.” Jesus said, then and now, “Get up and take that filthy bed with you!” (vs.8).

**FOURTH.** “I don’t want any priests with flat noses” (v.18d). That sounds pretty strange, but it won’t be when I finish explaining it! © “Smelling” in the Bible speaks of “discerning.” Isn’t it interesting how often clichés or vernacularisms we use in the world are so apt, so applicable to our Christian experience? We say, “I don’t know – the thing just didn’t *smell* right to me.” That is a description of a healthy nose; of clear discernment. Leviticus declares: “I don’t want anyone with a *flat nose* being My priest.”

Hebrews 5:13 and 14 will bring greater understanding to this. “*Anyone who lives on milk being still an infant...*” Is it a sin to be an infant? No, only if you stay that way. Is it a sin to live on milk? No, not if

you're an infant. Milk is an important food for infants just beginning to grow. We certainly don't want to get spiritual rickets! ☺ But even our contemporary health professionals have decided it's not the perfect food as we once believed it to be! Selah.

*“Anyone who lives on milk being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Heb.5:13,14)”* Or, it may be more familiar to you from the King James: *“who by reason of use have discerned... have their senses exercised to discern....”* Exercising your spiritual sense of smell is learning to discern – *“both good and evil.”*

It's amazing what satan has done to the people of God because of his fear (and our threat) that we might actually grow up. Are you ready for this? Because – if we really grew up and actually, practically, walked in the level of teaching we have had in the Church over the past few decades, he knew we would be able to sniff him out!

Satan preceded that maturity in the Body of Christ with a threat of his own making. He asserted, “You don't have a right to smell out something if your leader doesn't smell it first.” And we believed him! Now you know I believe in the local church. I believe in authority. I believe in submission and all those true biblical doctrines. But, I also believe it's a new day – and God is talking to *individuals* – as well as leaders. Remember we are all priests unto Him, a Kingdom of priests (Ex.19:6). But I've seen some of the tactics of satan that have been levied at us and caused many of God's people to be too fearful to rise and speak up about what they discern.

Sometimes it is productive to tell you how NOT to do something in order for you to do it. ☺ If you want a flat nose, every time the Holy Spirit speaks to you – ignore Him. Do not listen to what He tells you, and do not act on what you are hearing.

The Lord begins bringing revelation to a baby by shouting loudly, so we can't miss the Voice. But as we grow in maturity and are more exercised in discerning Him, the softer His voice becomes. I know the old-timers understand this and agree that it is the way of God. And it **is** absolutely true, my friends. When the Holy Spirit brings you to a place where He can “guide you by His eye” (Ps.32:8b), without having to accompany His directions with obvious physical phenomena like Holy Ghost goosebumps, you're not a flat-nosed priest. On the contrary, “by reason of use” you've had a keenness developed within you and you no longer have to question what people think of this leader and that speaker. You grow to a place where you can declare, “I know when a thing is of God and I know when a thing is not from God.”

That's what God wants to bring us to – to the place where we are not living in a state of panic and uncertainty. “Well, who *do* you believe? This one or this one or this one?” And God says, “Yooo-hoooo.” ☺

**FIFTH.** God says, *“I don't want anything that is **superfluous** on My priests (v.18e).* No, not anything that *deforms* them or is extra or unnecessary or not essential. No additions of skin where they don't belong. I don't want anything *added to* My priests.”

The word “holy” so aptly describes this. The Greek word is /hagios/ and basically means, “no added mixture.” It's not talking about purity and impurity. Holy is unrelated to pure or impure. Holy means “nothing added.” If you put water and oil together, it ceases to be holy. Do you understand that?

God challenges us: “You add this and you add that – and because in and of itself it's not *impure*, or it's not sinful, or it's not a spot or wrinkle – because in and of itself it's not *blighted* – you think that it's alright to add it. But I'm telling you, My child, I don't want you adding anything.” Is that scriptural? Oh yes. “Woe to the individual who adds anything to this” (see Deut.4:2; 12:32; Pr.30:6; Rev.22:18). It's like this – and I'll use myself for an example – it's less painful for you that way. ☺ When I give a

prophetic utterance, I add a little something to God's prophetic word through me. You never do that, I'm sure. ☺ But, I do – in our example. God says to me, "This is what I'm going to do." And I repeat it saying, "Did you hear what God says He's going to do? He's going to do this – and this – and this." But God says, "I didn't say anything about 'this and this.'" I may try to explain my actions: "I know, but it sort of goes right along with what You did say!" ☺

Would you understand if I said there are many men and women today calling themselves "Reverend this" and "Reverend that" who never were intended by God to be preachers? But who still have a double portion anointing of God on their lives? When God said, "I will minister through you," they didn't hear "minister," they heard "preach" and off they went. Then it ceased to be holy (as the divine call had been) and became *superfluous* (a mixture, something added) and therefore unacceptable to God.

Then that old Peter-principle that operates rampantly in the world begins to operate in the church. And where we saw this key man or that key woman being used of God and flowing in everything so perfectly, suddenly they gave their lives wholly to the Lord – and went out into full-time ministry. Soon afterwards, everything fell apart. No doors were opened. And their Christian friends came along and said, "It's the devil." No, it's being *flat-nosed, superfluous* priests! Do you understand what I mean? We've *added* something human to what God divinely ordained.

Have you ever seen the poster with a cat hanging from a tree limb by its front paws? The caption under the picture is, "Hang in there!" I see some pastors, missionaries, and evangelists who are like that cat just hanging there by a claw. And there are only a few people who would dare to say to them, "You missed God." You see, we know how to open churches, but we've never learned how to shut them down. We just keep adding on. Are you okay?

**SIX.** The next negative trait is *broken footed* (Lev.21:19a). That's a *limited walk* – a fractured walk. That's a person who ministers – now, I'm not just talking about "preachers" but the *priesthood* – we are all a royal priesthood (1Pet.2:9) and all ministers for Christ, His hands extended to a needy world. These people are always *limited* by their *past hurts*. They once had a broken foot. I know about this problem because I walked with a *broken foot* for years – while in the ministry. I just could not forgive *myself* for my divorce.

So many years ago, my life, I felt in my mind, my Christian life ended when my marriage ended in divorce. I didn't know then that God could restore people. I didn't know He could pick you up and put Himself *in you* in a new dimension. I'd been taught by my denomination that divorce was unpardonable. It eliminated you from the priesthood. You might still get to heaven if you really had the Blood of Christ, but now you had to have a "special pass."

So, when God thrust me into the ministry – and you can believe me when I tell you that is almost literal! – it was years before I could say, as I can say to you today, "I wouldn't be doing anything but this. I'd rather be preaching the Word than anything in life." But it took years for that to work into me and get into my spirit. Years. In my beginning ministry, I walked with that *crippled foot*. I drug it behind me everywhere I went and apologized to people, "Now look folks, I'm a woman and I'm divorced. That's two strikes right there. And I know you don't really want to hear me – but here we are." And I limped along. I was also finally healed. Hallelujah!

I used to have people say to me, "Iverna, you don't have to apologize for that. The Word of God will make a way for you." And I'd lament, "Oh yes, but you don't understand. You just don't." God says "I'm going to have a priest without spot or wrinkle. And I'm going to have someone that doesn't drag the foot behind."

May I say as you read this, God is speaking to some people even now? You've been dragging your foot for years. And every time you receive another word from God saying, "Here's what I'm saying to you..."

you respond, “Yes, but oh my God. If they ever found out about my past!” Isn’t that interesting? We expect Him to forgive us for what we won’t!

**SEVEN.** “*I don’t want you to have a **broken hand**, either (v.19b).* I don’t want anyone that cannot *reach out*. Ministry has become such a professional field – it has lost the reaching out and developed instead, expertise in delivery and oratory and depth. Inadvertently then we, we the clergy, have taught you to be the same thing – in the same way. I watch people. You come to church – you sit beside someone – neither of you speak – you don’t touch unless the leader says, “Everyone across the room take hands.”

I remember many years ago when I was in a particular service and the leader said, “I want you to take both hands of the person next to you and look them right in the eye.” Then he had the nerve to say, ☺ “And I want you to sing to each other, ‘I love you with the love of the Lord.’” Now, that was before I was free. ☹ So I took this person’s hands, but we sang to each other’s feet! ☺ We were so embarrassed! “I love you with the love of the Lord...” Isn’t that interesting? We get so excited when we think God’s really going to use us – and we’re going to minister to one another – and services are going to be full of deliverance and healing. Isn’t that great? Oh yes it is! But first we have to see them and talk to them!

I counsel hurting people all the time. I hear them saying to me, “I’ve been going to this church x-number of years.” Sometimes it is years, honestly. “And I don’t know anyone. It’s just a bunch of little cliques. You go every Sunday but they don’t know you’re there. I mean, it’s like set in concrete. You know. I mean, I just don’t seem to fit – and I have tried to get involved.”

Church – that should never be true of God’s house! That’s a worse accusation than buying and selling the sacrifices! Can you imagine how Jesus would feel if He’d step into some of our churches and see that kind of exclusivity going on? That kind of *prejudice*? The truth is, it’s more than prejudice, it’s outright *fear*. It really is.

One time when I was ministering in Germany, it was the closing meeting but I wasn’t the speaker so I asked to be if I just could be part of the congregation. While I was seated there at the table, I was surrounded by people who spoke a language I did not speak. It was a little intimidating. I’d been ministering the whole time through interpreters, and yet God gave me a word for two of the people at the table. ☺ I had to call for an interpreter, drag him over to the table and say, “The Lord would say to this person...” And we watched the tears begin to flow down from their eyes as God gave them the very answers that they had come to the convention saying, “God I have to have this answered.” They were far more afraid of me than I was of them.

And you don’t realize it, but the person next to you is in the same position, the same situation you are. They’re afraid that they might miss it – Him. It takes only one to have the faith to say, “I have a hand that is not broken. And I choose to reach out to you.” It takes so little, Church, to just learn. Practice looking at your neighbor and saying, “How are you today? You know, you look good in green. You ought to always wear green.” Little things mean so much.

I get letters all the time from people who say, “I’ll never forget. I was sitting in a church, just miserable and hurting. I’d been going to this church for a long time, and I felt as if life was just hopeless. I knew you were the speaker on a given Sunday. I never dreamed I would ever get close enough to touch you, but as you walked down the aisle, I felt your hand on my shoulder, and I turned around. Sister Iverna, I was healed that night.” Or, “I was delivered.” Or, “God spoke right to me when I felt your touch.” We have so many of these testimonies.

What in the world did I do? Well, I didn’t have any neat goose-bumpy leading in the Spirit walking down that aisle. “Thus saith the living God!” ☺ But I’m just a toucher by nature. I am. I touch everything that moves. As I walk down an aisle, or through a crowd, I just touch people. Do you hear the heart of God in this? I know you’re probably thinking, “Well, that’s because it’s you, Iverna!” I don’t believe that! I

believe people are so in need of a touch that the Jesus in you would do the very same thing for them – if you would simply imagine Christ in you is their hope for that moment.

**EIGHT.** He says, “*I don’t want anyone that’s always **bent over** (Lev.21:21a). I don’t want the **crooked backs** – the arched, the hunched over.” I can imagine you’re wondering, “Well, what are you going to get out of that?” ☺ Didn’t you ever meet anyone that always said, “*I don’t want anyone with a **blemish in their eye** (v.20b). Anyone that’s got something stuck in there – that distorts their vision.” They’re the “Yes, but-ers” of the church.**

Let’s suppose God starts doing a new thing in your church. The young people come to the altar Sunday night to re-consecrate their lives to the Lord. And the Lord believes that! He cleanses them and baptizes them anew and afresh in the Holy Spirit. It’s just a wonderful time! They begin to hug one another and shout and dance. And this person, the one with the cataract, says, “*Yes, but* – I’ve seen this before, every time they go to a youth camp. Wooo-ooo! They all get happy and sing and are baptized. I want to *see* what happens when they get back in school!”

Well, they’ll probably fall because you were their support! And you’ve a **crooked back!** You’re not strong enough to support yourself let alone anyone else!

**NINE.** “*I don’t want anyone with **scurvy or scabs**” (v.20c). “Anyone with the itch” is literally what that means. People are always itching. “We need a new pastor.” They always want to start something new. Are you one of those? If you are, get in a closet of prayer and stabilize! You’ve been hopping from one church to another looking for the most perfect one with all the latest programs going on. The reason you don’t find that perfect place is because once you get there and settle in, it isn’t perfect anymore! ☺ I’m not saying, “Don’t have a vision for new things.” This is a person who is never satisfied. They always have to scratch a little harder, dig a little deeper. It doesn’t matter what happens, there’s always something else they want. God says, “*I don’t want that kind of thing to represent My priests.*”*

**TEN.** Lastly, but certainly not the least, He says, “*I don’t want My priests to have their **stones broken** (v.20d). I don’t want any priests, by reason of *defects within their lives*, which cannot bring forth, or reproduce.” They cannot give birth. How did satan divert this concern? How has he been able to get us to ignore this direction from the Lord? How have we forgotten our purpose for living? What’s happened with, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers?” (Mt.9:38; Lk.10:2). What’s happened with, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men?” (Mk.1:17). What’s happened with, “He that winneth souls is wise?” (Pr.11:30) or “Go ye into all the world...” (Mk.16:15,16; Mt.28:19,20).*

I’ll tell you what’s happened. Satan brought focus on categories and titles and forced the people of God to “name their ministries.” And if it wasn’t “evangelism,” we washed our hands of the responsibility to win souls. “Well, my ministry is ‘hospitality.’ So I just minister...” Well, there is such a thing as a ministry of hospitality. It’s my personal belief that God wants *everyone* to have it towards *anyone* He brings to our door. It’s not only my personal belief, however, I could prove it to you from scripture! (i.e.Rom.12:10,13; Heb.13:1,2; 1Pet.4:9) But He says, “I sent angels to some of you and because you didn’t have the ministry of hospitality, you sent them away” (see.Heb.13:1). Are you learning something?

So, satan says, “I’ll tell you what I can do with the Body of Christ. If they all get out there and they all get cleaned up, and they all get pure and they all start winning souls, the Kingdom of God will be established! And, I will have had it!” So, he says, “I’ve got to talk them out of the fact that souls need to be saved, so I’ll convince them that only certain people have to do that.” So, we say, “So-and-So has a tremendous ministry of evangelism! I tell you, when she ministers, hundreds of people accept the Lord Jesus. Isn’t that wonderful? Oh, yes. Let’s all clap for Rev. So-and-So...” clap-clap-clap... And *you* work and live beside individuals that God strategically placed you to work beside because they’re primed and ready to receive Christ. But YOU never asked them!

Some years ago, I was thinking about fish – and fishers of men. It was then God spoke these words to me, “Iverna, the fish are already in the net.” That’s God’s job. I cannot call the fish to the net. Nor can you. Remember when the disciples had been fishing all night long – on their own? (Jn.21:1ff). All night long! Experienced, professional, expert fishermen. But they couldn’t catch a thing – until Jesus came. He called out to them, “Having any luck boys?” “No.” Then He suggested, “Try the right side.”

Now, I’ve been out on fishing boats and I know about fishermen. They are persistent. They try here. They try there. Then they try over there. Then they talk to the other fishermen in the area and they say, “Anything going on over there?” And they search the waters for fish. That’s why they’re called hunters and fishers in the Bible.

So, what’s the “right side?” OBEDIENCE! That’s how simple that story is! Jesus says, “Did you catch any fish?” “No Sir, we did not.” “How long have you been fishin’?” “All night long.” And so have we. It’s been a long night, Church! There’s a lot of sin out there. And we groan, “Oh, my God. We’ve only had four people saved in our church all year.”

The Lord says, “Try the ‘right side.’” “What do You mean? I don’t think there’s anything we haven’t tried. We’ve had TV ads. We brought in the most eloquent traveling evangelists. We’ve fasted and prayed...” “Why don’t you try obedience?” “You mean – me? I’m not talking about growing in the Lord, Lord. I’m talking about catching fish.” ☺ “So am I.” Hmmm.

We have people today who are proud of prayer. There’s a renewed emphasis on prayer. So every place I travel, the pastor picks me up at the airport and says, “Our people are so excited. They’ve never prayed like they’re praying now. We have 60 people praying from 5 to 6 in the morning, and another 60 join them from 6 to 7. I tell you, we’re praying!” I often ask, “So, what’s happening?” “Huh?” “What’s happening?” “I just told you.” “You told me people were praying. What’s happening as a result?”

We’re not supposed to just go fishing – there should be a catch – a harvest of fish. Likewise, we don’t just pray to pray – we need to expect answers and results from our praying and touching God. We went through that with praise some years back (some churches are still there!). “We’re a praising church.” “Does the Lord know that? Is He there? Does He meet you there?” “Well, when we started He was.”

I remember the presence of the Lord when we first learned to praise Him. There was a dimension of Glory we had not known before, right? We sang from within our hearts; it was the song of the spirit: “I love You, Lord – I worship You – I exalt and magnify Your holy Name.” And He was there! No one had to tell us to keep on going – to keep on singing – to keep on praising. It just flowed and flowed. And then – He removed Himself. Why was that? *Because, if He didn’t go up higher, neither would we.* He went up higher and said, “Come on up here.” And we said again, “I love You, Lord.” *Same level of praise.* It didn’t work and so we decided: “Sing and dance,” ☺ just trying to add a new dimension to our praises. And we kept on going like we had been, thinking, “That worked once.”

We failed to listen carefully as He said, “Try the ‘right side.’” I said, “Lord, are you talking to me about *obedience*?” “Yes, Iverna, because **the next level will require greater obedience.** How badly do you really want Me?” “I want You, Lord. I do!” “Well then, you know the things I’ve been dealing with you about?” “Yes. Lord.” “I want them accomplished, and I want them now. I don’t want to deal with them anymore. I don’t want you going around the mountain again. We’re not playing games anymore. I’m up here and you’re down there and I’ve shown you the way. If you’ll move in *obedience* and get your eyes off other people, you will come into the perfection of Christ and be a perfect priesthood.”

We have no comprehension, Church, of the dynamics of the Glory of God that is about to be shed upon the people of God. We won’t be identified by the little buttons we wear or the fish symbols on the trunks of our cars. Everywhere we go the Glory of God will be manifest upon us. It won’t be by our searching, seeking, trying to find something to deal with, but His glory will be evident as we walk in peace, having our feet shod with the preparation of the Good News (Eph.6:15).

People will say to us, “You seem to be a person who has it all together. There’s just something about your life that makes you different. Can you share what that is? Can you give me a word?” And our minds will think, “I don’t know what to say to this person.” But out of our mouths will flow the word of counsel, the word of wisdom, the word of power, the word of might that sets men and women free. It will be an obvious manifestation of the power of God through consecrated lives (see 1Cor.12:4-11; Isa.11:2).

When we learn to fish on the “right side” of the boat – when we learn to surrender to God what is “self”-motivated – when we learn to walk in personal obedience and consistently choose His way – that will be a day of the greatest victory the church has ever known. For the Bible says The Word of God shall be “a two-edged sword” (Heb.4:12). It is not what any man (human being) says but it is the WORD that is coming down from heaven, making a clean cut. This is what is important: “What does the Word say?” because the Spirit of the Word is Christ (Jn.1:1,2,14). What is the intent of this Word? It is to remove every blemish and every blight so that people may be restored and made whole (see Heb.4:12-16).

“But, Iverna, you haven’t answered the question I hoped you would address. Should fallen ministers be restored and reinstated to the places of positional authority they once held?” Yes, in my opinion they should. But everything that needs to be restored has first evidenced a *blemish* which creates the personal need for cleansing and restoration. By reason of use, furniture deteriorates and needs to be restored. By reason of misuse. . . . You who have ever moved long distances and shipped furniture in a van understand this – your furniture leaves here beautiful and arrives there marred and dented and scratched. And where the straps have held it secure, the marks remain – perhaps faint, but they still show. But – I can still use my furniture once it is restored.

I cannot think of a hell on earth more perfectly described, than to take a man or woman who has a call or an anointing that remains and say to them, “You can never preach again.” I’d rather die! I would. I’d rather die than have someone say to me, “You may never again preach the Word of God.” I’d say, “Then kill me, there’s no reason for me to live.” You may suggest this: “Well, they can do other things.” Not when you’re called to preach. You can’t. Don’t kid yourself.

If you don’t have that call, you can’t understand the weight of this. But the Bible says, “Thy zeal hath eaten me” (Ps.119:139). When that call to preach the Word of God is within you – it’s inside of you – it *is* like a fire burning within (Jer.20:9) – and unless the Lord withdraws the anointing, and there are occasions when He does, but on more occasions He does not withdraw the anointing. Why not? Because His Word teaches – restore – restore – restore!

So, what then? Forgive and forget? “Oh, no! We have a blemish here!” Should the guilty, fallen man be given back that which God enabled him to establish? I don’t believe the church will do that, but I’m telling you what I think God thinks. God would have wanted to absolutely *prevent* the testing of these areas of a man’s weakness. One who has failed in regards to money should never be permitted to handle the money again. And one who has failed in morals should never be allowed to be in a situation where immorality could be a challenge again. What about the repentant, healed, restored, re-committed minister of the Word?

But you see, the Body of Christ isn’t big enough yet; we’re not mature enough for “every joint to supply” (Eph.4:16b). We read it and we talk it, but we don’t understand it and we don’t do it! We say, “Well, if we have to give him a financial person to carry on, or if we have to give him a body guard, or if we have to take away this and that, then he’s not worth. . . .” Oh, really?

You watch it. They’re going to find Mr. Clean somewhere down the line. If not in this generation, we’ll die in the wilderness and there’ll be another generation that follows us. It has always been so. Some day the Godly will grow up enough to really and truly understand: we have been given the *ministry of reconciliation* (2Cor.5:18). We can bring restitution and reinstatement with understanding. When a person is left out there dangling, when you are capable in this area and anointed in that one and that one,

but at the same time, there are areas of weakness evident, the whole Body of Christ doesn't know how to "fitly join themselves together" (Eph.4:16a). So they stand back and make heroes out of leaders (and some begin to believe the press reports!) that leader becomes like a personification of God. Truth? No, he's not – not even close! "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man" (2Cor.4:7).

I receive lots of acclaim and love and attention and so on from people in the Church. And every once in awhile, the Lord allows something absolutely wonderful to happen as I'm ministering in His name. There was a time when I was preaching in Australia, ministering to a group of about a thousand, when a woman stood up just as I had barely begun in the Word. She shouted, "Excuse me! Excuse me!" I had no intentions of excusing her ☺ so I just went on talking. But she interrupted again, "Excuse me!" I realized I needed to deal with her situation from the platform so I said, "Yes?" She pointed to a lump beside her and said, "I think she's dead." I looked and sure enough, there was a humped-over individual, a limp person just bent over in the chair.

Being a great woman of faith and power ☺ I said to the woman who was traveling with me, "Would you go back there, please?" I looked to the sister who had set up the meetings and she looked at me like I was the one in charge. ☺ Then she also went back and laid hands on the lady and they both prayed.

In the meantime, I'm still up front, covering – saying, "Let's just hold steady here and believe the Lord together. Hallelujah! There's power in praise. We're going to praise the Lord." And I began leading the rest of the people. In the meantime, God spoke to me, "I want you to go back there." I continued from my post, singing in the spirit: "Praise You, Lord. Praise You, Lord." Can you identify with that? Six nurses were in the building and they all made their way to the one in obviously dire straits and checked on her. I was waiting for God's miracle so I could lead the people in a grand response. ☺ And they started to carry her out.

God said to me again, "I want you to do back there!" And I quietly queried Him: "What'll I do?" He instructed, "Lay hands on her and speak healing." Australia was a hard case to crack open for a woman preacher back then, and God had given me favor in the nation. "That's easy for You to say, God. My whole reputation is at stake here. You promise if I do it...?" I heard nothing more from Him. Now, the only thing that saves me from grave calamities in my life is not because I'm fearless, but because I'm more afraid of God than I am of you! ☺ The right kind of reverential fear, of course. I was more afraid of Him than I was of them.

Now they were still carrying her out toward the back door. Unfortunately, it was a long narrow hall. And of course, it took a long time to get back there, but I went off almost on a chase. And everyone stood to their feet shouting, almost squealing: "Ohhhh, glory! The woman of God's going to lay hands on her now!" ☺ And all these thousand sets of eyeballs were turned watching me. I walked back to where they had her, and this woman is *::whoosh::* like out cold. ☺

They had about five other women carrying her and the sirens were screaming: "Whirrr-rrr!" Someone had called for an ambulance. So, as unobtrusively as I know how, ☺ I reached my hand out and laid it right on her heart and declared, "I speak life to this body in the Name of Jesus!" And just that fast, I turned around, walked all the way back up that long aisle and returned to the platform. All the people were staring at me and I was looking, not really expecting, mind you, but hoping that maybe God would... you know. ☺ And they carried her right on out of the room, still very limp.

I said, "Well, the will of the Lord be done. Now listen..." And I went back and preached the Word to the group because that's what the Lord told me to do: "Now, finish your message." When I finished my message, the leaders were due to have lunch together, but I said, "I'm not feeling well enough to eat. Would you mind terribly taking me back to my hotel?" So they did.

Inside, I was mad! I said, “God, it would be one thing if they die when I preach, and quite another when You didn’t raise her when Sister So-and-So prayed. But, when You sent ME down there specifically to say, ‘I speak life...’” And I spent my whole afternoon that way, throwing a little tantrum – okay, a big tantrum! – because God didn’t do what I wanted Him to do. Not sick – but sick of it all!

Sooner than I wanted or was ready, it was time for church that same evening. I definitely was not in victory. I had a prepared message to deliver and someone met me and drove me to the service. We arrived a little early and I sat down on the front row. I was privately praying, apologizing to God saying, “God, forgive me for how I feel.” But I have to ask *you*, how would you feel? I was just trying to get the victory so I could preach again. The Leaders came and invited me to join them on the platform and I had to go face all those people one more time. I didn’t have many options! Australia was a long way from my home! ☺

So, I went up there and the people in the auditorium seemed to be in marvelous victory! No one seemed to be upset but me. They praised the Lord and sang hymns and choruses and I praised the Lord – sort of. ☺ And the woman seated next to me said with great excitement, “Isn’t it incredible what happened today?” I lamely replied, “Yeah. Yes. Hallelujah.”

I didn’t know exactly what she meant, but I didn’t want to know either. And she went on, “Yeah, I know. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it – ever!” I said, “To what are you referring?” She said, “You know, the lady that died.” And I whispered, “I thought that’s what you meant.” She repeated herself with such amazement, “Isn’t it a wonder!” I said, “Which part amazes you?” She said, “I mean about her *resurrection!*” Now *I* was amazed! “She did?” She pointed as she said, “Well, there she is!” “Hmmm. Someone could have told me.” ☺ “Well, she was on her way to the hospital and just sat up in the ambulance. ‘What’s going on here?’ They were so shocked, they took her on into Emergency and gave her a complete physical.” The report was, “Lady, there is not one thing wrong with you.”

Now why would God do it that way? I mean, if she had risen in front of that congregation, could you imagine how they would feel about me *then*? God says, “Yeah. They would bow – and you couldn’t handle it. I’m not sharing My Glory anymore.” Awww, Church. Please hear it. It was a valuable lesson to me. I spent a good portion of that night asking God to forgive me! And saying, “I don’t care if it’s when I preach or when anyone else does. I’m asking You to change lives, Father. I don’t care if it’s when I lay hands on the sick that they recover or when someone else does. I’m asking You that the sick would recover.”

Oh, when that Spirit comes back in Revival, I want you to *know* the priest. I want you to *be* the priest! Let’s deal with the things God is pinpointing in us that disqualify us at present. Let’s release the things of the past that drag us down. Let’s be careful that we don’t add anything to what He has called us to do, but also be careful to be obedient to what He directs. Church, there is much we need to attend to if we are to be ready when the Spirit of God is poured out once again – and of this we can be certain: He is coming – soon!