

200923-4 Nu 16, 41-50, Israel Neglects the Priesthood—CThurman

This chapter divides into two parts. The first part (vss.1-40) concerns Korah and company's presumptuous attempt take upon themselves the function of the priesthood of Aaron. Korah and company rejects the LORD's priesthood. The second part (vss.41-50) proves the importance of this priesthood for the nation of Israel, a function which the congregation does not understand. (Or, the congregation neglects the priesthood.) Taken as a whole, the 16th chapter presents Israel's rejection of the priesthood; chapter 17, concerns the confirmation of the priesthood; and, chapter 18, the support of the priesthood.

Korah, of the tribe of Kohath, and the brothers, Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben, with 250 princes of Levi (& so considered of the tribes of Israel, cf. v.2) led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. In effect these men rejected those that God called for this service and sought to set themselves up to perform the function of this office. These men complained that Moses and Aaron had not only presumed to put themselves into the priesthood but appointed themselves to be princes over the whole congregation of Israel. (cf. Nu.16.3, 13) Moses now will have the LORD prove who shall serve in the office of the priesthood for Israel and by default prove those who will not. (cf. v.4-11)

Korah and the 250 princes involved were to bring their brass censers to burn a very special mixture of spices, called perfume in Ex.30.34-38, which is in other places, translated *incense*, *sweet incense*.

perfume, קֶטֶר, q^e-to-reth, tss. *perfume* (3, Ex.30.35, 37; Pv.27.9), *sweet incense* (2, Ex.31.11; Le.4.7) and *incense* (54); see also the verb קָטַר, qatar & the noun קֶטֶר, qitter.

This peculiar method to which Moses resorts for proving those which the LORD had called into the priesthood must have been influenced by the tragic example set in Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire before the LORD. Their judgment involved the LORD immediately sending forth a fire that devoured them both. In the judgment that fell upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram they went down into the pit alive when the earth opened up to receive them as Moses had prayed, but the 250 princes suffered the same fate as did Nadab and Abihu. The LORD

sent forth a fire and consumed them. (cf. Nu.16.29-32,35; Ps.106.17, 18, also maintains two judgments: one upon Korah, Dathan & Abiram, and one upon the 250 princes) These rebels certainly did not understand the importance of the priesthood, but in the remainder of this chapter the same may also be said of the whole congregation.

In the last lesson most of you might remember that I admitted taking liberty with the Scriptures to lay out the possibility that a man named On (cf. Nu.16.1), involved in the seditious error of Korah, might have come to his senses and was recovered. For support of this notion I considered that in the book of Jude, which is the only NT book to name Korah (Core), that there some brethren might be recovered from the errors of Cain, Balaam or Core by acts of compassion and fear (fear, meaning for those in the error, and the harm they suffer to their own souls as a result). (cf Jude 22, 23)

Now let's turn our attention to the text before us, in verses 41-50. This portion of Scripture concerns the day following the judgment of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes, renowned men of the assembly. Moses notes the attitude of the congregation toward him and his brother, Aaron. Rather than being humbled and fearful they are accusatory and hostile.

We need to read these ten verses first and then begin with the exposition of the text.

41 ¶ *But on the morrow*

The Spirit of the LORD through the pen of Moses marks how the people turned against the servant of the LORD and his brother, Aaron.

all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

Charles Spurgeon called the rebellion by Korah and his band 'Wonderful audacity ...' *Spurgeon's Devotional Bible*, p.126 At first we might ask ourselves how a people could be so rash. Were they much different than we are?

The blame for this judgment, instead of being laid at the sinners' feet, was placed upon the servants of God who were only doing the will of God. This man captures the sentiment of the people against Moses and Aaron that day.

'You, who should have preserved them, and interceded for them, have pulled down God's wrath upon them, for the maintenance of your own authority and interest.' *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 1, p.297

How ignorant Israel was of that which Moses and Aaron did for them day after day. What were these two servants of God doing for Israel? They were interceding for them to God.

Nu 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

Nu 16:22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Nu 16:45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

Humanly speaking, since Israel had been delivered from Egyptian bondage, had it not been for the intercession of Moses and Aaron, both of whom are a type for Christ, the LORD would have destroyed Israel on the very day that God gave to them His holy law. Before Moses had descended Mount Sinai the people were already shamefully naked and dancing around the golden calf. It was Moses' intercession that delivered Israel from immediate destruction. How many times the whole nation would have been consumed *as in a moment*. (cf. v.22, 45)

Moses interceded for Israel again and again. When the waters were bitter, when they had no food, when they had no water, when they complained about the manna, when they complained against Moses, we read that he interceded for them. And the LORD heard him. To this time there are

especially four instances when the LORD would have destroyed the nation but for the intercessions of Moses: the golden calf (Ex.32.10), refusing to enter the land of promise (Nu.14.11-20), the rejection of the priesthood (Nu.16.20), and rejection of Moses and Aaron (Nu.16.51).

The golden calf at the giving of the Law; idolatry (twice- threatened destruction):

1. *Ex.32.10* (The LORD said,) *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

...

Moses interceded,

11 *And Moses besought the LORD his God,*

...

14 *And the LORD repented of the evil ...*

2. *Ex 33:5* *For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee ...*

...

9 *And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.*

...

13 *Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.*

...

17 *And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.*

Refusing to enter the promised land:

Nu 14:11 *And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?*

12 *I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.*

17 *And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,*

18 *The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.*

19 *Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.*

20 ¶ *And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word ...*

The rebellion of Korah & his band against God's priesthood:

Nu.16.20 *And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,*

21 *Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.*

22 *And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?*

23 ¶ *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying ...*

The negligence of the congregation of God's priesthood:

Nu.16.41 ¶ *But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.*

42 *And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.*

43 *And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.*

44 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

45 *Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.*

46 *And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the*

congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Intercession was made for Israel, not the whole world. These that had been delivered from Egyptian bondage based on the shed blood of a lamb had need of the intercessions of Moses as they made their way to the land of Canaan. Those purchased by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ His Son, have Christ interceding to God for them to save them unto all perfection, to the very end.

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Where would Israel have been without the intercessions of Moses? Delivered yes, but continuing in that deliverance, day by day, no. Where would we be without the intercessions of Jesus Christ our Lord. Brethren, we sin. We have need. We deserved, even since we have believed, judgment. There's not a one of us that should have been spared to live to this day because we have so sinned against the love of God for us. We have been proud, arrogant and boastful of our accomplishments. We have been dishonest in our dealings with others. We have stolen from others. We have been covetous and idolatrous. We have been superstitious. We have lied. We have murmured and complained against others and the Lord. We have blasphemed. We have been unthankful. We have purposely disobeyed the Lord. We have determined to do what we knew was not the will of God. We have presumed upon the grace of God again and again. We don't trust and pray as we ought. This miserable list doesn't exclude any of us since we have believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of soul. The truth is, had it not been for the intercessions of our Lord Jesus Christ for us we should have long ago been removed from this earth. Any honest self-

examination of the love of God for us in Christ would confess that God has been patient and longsuffering and of great mercy to each and every one of us.

*Ex.34.6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,
7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

The things that I have written here should not be construed to be a justification for any child of God to continue living in sin. Presuming upon the precious sacrifice and intercessions of Jesus Christ comes at a price: health, family, friends, church, daily living, and even death.

Ps 19:13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

The intercessions of Moses were important for Israel. Moses stands here as a type for the intercessions of Jesus Christ in our behalf and how important His intercessions are for us day by day.

42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

Apparently the congregation came to where Moses and Aaron's encampment was located, which was to the east of the tabernacle. It was probably from here that something got their attention so that they looked back to the tabernacle and saw the glory of the LORD over it.

43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

Left the place where they were and came to the place where the tabernacle was located, in the center of the entire camp of Israel.

44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.

moment, כְּרִגְעָה, k^e-ra-ga[g], masc. sing. noun רִגְעָה with the prefixed adv. כֵּן, for *as*; re-ga[g], tss Ex.33.5, *a moment*; Nu.16.21, *a space*; Ps.6.10, *suddenly*.

It was this same response that that the LORD had for the sin of Korah and his band. (cf. vss, 19, 21) Undoubtedly the people began to fear for what they had done.

And they *fell upon their faces.*

[Moses and Aaron]

... to intercede for the people. (previously cited, Nu.14.5; 16.22, 45) Sin had so blinded them to the dangers in which they had come.

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a *censer, and put fire therein*

[brass] firepan

censer, מַחְתָּה, mach-tah, tss. *censer* (15), *firepan* (4), *snuffdish* (3).

from off the *altar,*

[brazen]

[always from this altar, cf. Lev.16.12; 10.1; Nu.16.46; Re.8.5]

and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation,

[that have gathered together there nearby]

incense, קְטֹרֶת, q^e-to-reth, tss. *incense*, *sweet incense*, & *perfume* (cf. Ex.25.6; 30.1; 30.35, 36; 35.8).

and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

and make an atonement, כִּפֵּר, Piel (intensive act.) imper. sing. masc. of כָּפַר; the Piel verb is to be busy, repetitive about the business of atoning; כָּפַר; is tss. to pitch (Noah's ark, Ge.6.14), atonement (Ex.30.10), to be merciful (Deu.32.43), to purge (Ez.43.20), to reconcile (Ez.45.20), to pacify (Ez.16.63), to appease (Ge.32.20), to pardon (2Chr.30.18), to forgive (Ps.78.38), to disannul (Is.28.18), to be cleansed (Nu.35.33).

In Deu.21.8, this same verb in Piel imperative is tss. *Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto they people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.*

wrath, the noun קִצְף, tss. wrath, indignation.

plague, the noun נִגַף, is tss. plague; the verb נָגַף, is tss. to hurt, to smite, to plague, to dash, to stumble, to be slain, to be put to the worse.

Something was perceptible to Moses and Aaron that judgment from the LORD began to fall upon the people. It must have been that they saw the Israelites dying in succession as the LORD began to move forward from the tabernacle and into the camp. At this Moses urged his brother Aaron to hurry into the camp with the smoke of the burning incense to atone for their sin. The image is that the word of God presents is that Aaron came to the place where there was a line where there was the dead on one side and the living on the other. By this atoning incense, synonymous to intercessions, Aaron formed a barrier between the dead and the living (the next verse), between God and sinners, and in this case, sinners of the children of Israel.

Like these Israelites, it must be true that more often than not so many baptized-believing, church-related children of God simply become so jaded

to what sin is that they no longer have a right perception about the sinfulness of sin. They simply do not understand how offensive sin is to God. In effect they play with fire and expect not to get burned.

Pr 6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?

More often than not we begin desensitizing ourselves to sin a little here and a little there by ignoring the simple things of God's word. It doesn't matter whether we are young or old. This works the same for us all. However, the young adults, as they begin to venture out on their own and for the first time test their newfound independence are particularly vulnerable to the deceptions of their own hearts.

Ec 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. (What then? Live in light of judgment.)

We cannot expect to be untouched by the world when we yoke ourselves together with unbelievers. When our major friendships are constituted of those that are Christless, when we flirt with the notion of marrying unbelievers the time will come when the Lord will bring us into judgment. That's is what the wise man Solomon said. Ignoring some of the simplest teachings of Scripture can bring a lifetime of hardships.

Church life: Some of us will spend a lifetime never coming to grips with what it means to be a part of the Lord's church. For the love of Christ we will be here when the church gathers together. We will miss being here. We cannot be a part if we are not here. We can't expect to miss the equivalent of 9-10 months of services and think everything is alright. We can't expect to understand, to grow, to learn with the church when we are not here. We can make room for everything but for the house of God. The opposite ought to be true. We'll make room for everything else after God's house. I'm not sure where this notion came from, but as a member of the Lord's church, attending its services isn't even an option.

‘When church is optional for parents it will usually be absent in the lives of the next generation.’ Anon.

The word of God commands us NOT to forsake the assembling together of the saints.

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner (custom, a common practice) of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

In Paul’s day some evidently habitually excused themselves from the services, by the words *as the manner of some is*. To borrow the words of Spurgeon in the quote above, *wonderful audacity*. Like Israel at this place, they neglected the priesthood, and in our case this is to neglect our own priestly duties as a member of this church. (I will discuss a little more at the close of this message.)

It is quite unusual for us to read of incense atoning. It causes us to think about what this could mean. We always think of blood as that which atone God for sins and this is correct. But based on blood, the intercessions of Christ appears to temper the judgment, punishment, chastening which only the *children* receive so that they can bear it.

Aaron was put to His work immediately. What was it that he did? He took his brass censer and put coals of fire from off of the brazen altar and put the finely ground incense on it (sweet incense [Ex.31.11], pure incense of sweet spices [**Ex.37.29, stacte, onycha, and galbanum with frankincense beaten small**] otherwise called perfume [Ex.30.34-38]), and ran to make the smoke and sweet fragrance run through the midst of the congregation. And in this manner atonement for sin was made. Offering up incense is a type for prayer.

Ps 141:2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Re 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

For those without Christ they have no sin-bearer. The intercessions of Christ is only in behalf of His people.

Is.53.11 ... he made intercession for the transgressors ... (otherwise referred to with the personal pronouns we, us, our, which is his seed [v.10], so Christ made intercession for the transgressors of His people.)

Ro 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

and ran, בָּרָץ, Qal fut. 3ps. masc. of the verb רָץ, tss. to run (oft), as a noun a guard, posts, as an adv. hastily, divided speedily, to stretch out, to run away.

made an atonement, וְכַפֵּר, Piel (intensive act.) imper. of כָּפַר, tss. to pitch (Ge.6.14), to atone (Ex.30.10), to be merciful (Deu.32.43); to purge (Ez.43.20), to reconcile (Ez.45.20), to be pacified (Ez.16.43); to appease (Ge.32.20), to pardon (2Chr.30.18); to forgive (Ps.78.38); to disannul (Is.28.18); to be cleansed (Nu.35.33).

On the Day of Atonement (cf. Le.16) incense is first seen as a covering of the mercyseat.

covering, כִּסָּה, Piel (intensive act.) pret. of כִּסָּה, tss. to cover, to conceal, to hide, to overwhelm, to close, to clothe.

*Le.16.11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself:
12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil:
13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:
14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.*

I've not understood this until recently, but like the incense that was brought first into the holiest of all on the Day of Atonement and then the blood was sprinkled, so Christ made intercessory prayer for His people (cf. John 17) and then went to the cross. (cf. John 17) The ground of Christ's intercessory prayer is His shed blood.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

and ... was stayed, וַתִּעָצֵר, Niphal (simple pass.) fut. of עָצַר, tss. to restrain, to close up, to shut up, to recover, to retain, to refrain, to detain; v.50 is the same, but in Niphal pret.

There are at least two types and two truths that can be drawn from this text. First as it concerns the children of God the intercessory prayers of Christ assuages the daily judgments of the Lord so that the children may continue in the services of Christ. Otherwise they could not continue in that service.

The Lord Jesus interceded for Peter for the great trial he is about to undergo:

Lu 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

The Lord promising to intercede for us to the Father to send the Holy Spirit:

Jn.14.16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 ¶ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Second, Christ's intercessions as it relates to the whole of humanity. If the dead represents those without Christ and the living represent the elect seed, then Christ intercedes only for His people. He is the divide between the dead and the living; between those that have no eternal life and those that possess it.

49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

With the numbers from the earlier census, of 603,550, and 14,000 dead, this is less than 4.31%. This compared to the fact that the LORD expressed that they all should have died (*Nu 16:45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.*) So the LORD is proved merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. (cf. Ex.34.6)to the congregation of Israel.

By intercessory prayer the LORD was appeased and satisfied for the crimes Israel committed against Him. By intercessory prayer the LORD pardoned and reconciled Israel. The stench of death that had been demonstrated in their members, by their actions was covered with the smell of the sweet spices of the stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, and with them the pure frankincense. This represented the acceptable sacrifice of Christ's prayers for His people. And as the LORD smelled this pleasant odor and was

appeared to the LORD heard the prayers of His only Son and was satisfied so to cut short the judgment and to spare the lives of the greater part of His people.

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

was stayed, נִעְצְרָה, Niphal (simple pass.) pret. of עָצַר, tss. to restrain, close up, shut up, recover, detain, etc. (v.48 is in Niphal fut.)

Korah and his band had rejected the priesthood of the LORD. The people had neglected it. The importance of the priesthood is proved. How much more clearly can it be shown to Israel how essential it was for them to have the intercessions Moses and Aaron, both standing as types of Jesus Christ. Even the sons of Aaron are involved in intercessory prayers. It is important that we intercede for one another. Consider that we may intercede in prayers for one another

2Co 1:11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Col 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds ...

1Th 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

Heb 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

He.7.25 ... he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Aaron ran ... there was an urgency for coming between the living and the dead so that the plague for sin might be stayed. He was *quick* to intercede. He saw the evidence that there was great need to intercede else many would be overcome in the judgment. We must not allow ourselves to become dull to the Spirit and in a worldly stupor. We must be quick to discern, not only our need, but the need our brethren for prayer. Pastors need prayer. Deacons need prayer. Evangelists need prayer. Every member of this church needs the faithful prayers of one another.

Ac 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

The man that had nothing to provide for his unexpected visitors received what he needed for his importunity to ask of his neighbor. A illustration the Lord Jesus gave to us to teach us to pray importunately ... BECAUSE THE LORD WILL ANSWER. (Lk.11.1, 13)

Lu 11:8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Jesus our Lord uses the example of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that we ought always to pray.

Lk.18.1 ¶ And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

We are commanded to pray without ceasing. (cf. 1Th 5:17) And again,

2Ti 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day ...

Regardless of what we think or feel, pray. Pray for others.

Before closing I want to share a term with you that I might rarely use in this assembly. That term is *'the priesthood of the believer.'* I believe in the priesthood of the believer. Given the texts of He.8.1; 10.21; Re.1.6; 5.10 how can we not understand this as a NT doctrine? By the use of that term I mean that every church-related, baptized believer is a priest to God, similar to the priesthood of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron under the direction of their high priest daily conducted the services of the LORD. They ministered at the brazen altar, washed at the laver, laid the bread upon the showbread table, trimmed the light of the candlestick, and offered the incense before the LORD. The LORD ordained them this service. This service was their life. They were not to stray from the manner of their service otherwise the LORD would bring them into judgment/chastening. Theirs was a special service that pertained to no other people, not of the twelve tribes of Israel, not of the Levitical tribes, and certainly not to the nations of the earth. This service only applied to the sons of Aaron. Like this priesthood is the priesthood of the believer, which is the member of every true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To this special NT-believer-priesthood is the charge to keep the true service of God. Only these, by the authority of Jesus Christ, are charged with the duties of preserving the word of God, the worship of God, and the way of God. The believer-priest is much like the sons of Aaron in the OT. They served the LORD all about the tabernacle as the cloud and fiery pillar rested upon it day after day during the long sojourn to the land of promise. And we see in the NT that the churches of Jesus Christ are the habitation of the

Spirit of God. (Eph.2.22) Like the Spirit of God upon that tabernacle in the wilderness, the churches of the NT are empowered (Ac.1.8), guided (Jn.16.13), instructed (Jn.14.26), comforted and preserved (Jn.14.16) and judged (1Co.3.17; 11.31, 32; 1Pe.4.17) by the same Spirit. And, more than any other service we might perform in our lifetimes, this service takes precedence over everything else. Christ takes '*second chair*' to no one! It is to this believer-priesthood that the Lord Jesus specially promises to keep them (Eph.3.21), to be with them (Mt.28.20), and that nothing should prevail against them (Mt.16.18). This has no application to '*believers at large.*' Like the Levites and the tribes of Israel in that day (of Number chapter 16) we should not be surprised to find that there are many that reject the legitimacy of the LORD's special work in the churches of Jesus Christ, We should not be surprised that they do not understand the important role the saints play in intercessory prayer to God. I think that these are some of the things that can be derived from the study of this 16th chapter of Numbers.

As there was then, there is today ... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; These should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light ... (1Pe 2:9) These are the holy ones, the saints of God, the churches of Jesus Christ. These are the rejected, neglected, misunderstood, abused, and persecuted.

Many of us have a healthy appreciation for the Lord's NT church. Some have yet to learn the importance in faithful service. The zeal for the *house of the Lord* doesn't burn as it ought to. I pray the Lord convince us all of the blessing there is for faithful service.