

The Believer's Privileges, Part 5: Election and Dominion

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9a

Code: 60-21

Let me introduce our study tonight by reminding you that the Bible says much about the cost of being a Christian. In fact, when I wrote the book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, its major emphasis really deals with the cost of being a Christian, both the cost to God and the cost to the one who comes to affirm faith in Christ. It goes without saying that Jesus emphasized the cost of discipleship. He said nobody builds a tower who doesn't first count the cost. Nobody goes to war who doesn't first assess his capability to win the victory. He said in Matthew chapter 10, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who doesn't take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." Clearly indicating that there is very definitely a cost.

And the same thing comes out of Luke chapter 14 where as I said He notes those same truths along with the building of a tower and the fighting of a war. He is saying there's a cost involved and you assess that cost. When you become a Christian and you engage yourself in the Christian experience and the Christian life, you understand there are certain costs, there are certain sacrifices, there are certain things that you are required not to do to turn your back on, to turn away from, to refuse to be involved with. The great emphasis in many ways of the New Testament is the cost of discipleship, the cost of following Jesus Christ.

But the great emphasis of our present text, and I think it's very special joy for our hearts, is that it is not a text on the cost. It does not deal with what it costs to be a Christian, if I can turn it around, it deals with what it pays...what it pays. Now we're talking about dividend, now we're talking about reward, now we're talking about treasure, now we're talking about riches, now we're talking about what we receive not what we give, what we possess not what we eliminate, the great spiritual riches that are the treasured possession of all true believers.

Now Peter has said much about the cost. In fact, much of what we have already read in 1 Peter and much of what we will yet read in 1 Peter will deal with the cost of being a Christian, what is required. But for now we're not talking about cost, we're talking about what it pays. And we're focusing on spiritual privilege. What does it pay? What accrues to me? What are the possessions that come into my life as a reality because of my relationship to Jesus Christ?

And I want to say that this is not an unfamiliar New Testament theme, certainly throughout the New Testament there is great emphasis on this. In Romans 9:23 it says that God wanted to demonstrate

His wrath and make His power known and thus has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. And then in verse 23, "He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared before hand for glory." God then wanting to pour out on us who are the vessels of mercy the riches of His glory, and that emphasizes, of course, the richness of being a Christian.

In the eleventh chapter of Romans in verse 12 it says that there are riches for the nations, riches in Christ. Those are not just future they are even present. In Romans 11 and verse 33, "O the depth of the riches, the undiminished resources, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

And so this matter of riches is a constant theme. You find it even in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 8, it says, "The riches of His grace which He lavished upon us...upon us all." Not will lavish but has lavished already. In Christ we are made rich. In 2:7 He shows us the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Chapter 3 verse 8 it says that we who have received the gospel have received that which was preached, namely the unfathomable riches of Christ. Then in verse 16, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory. Philippians 4:19, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His...what?...His riches."

So there is much in the New Testament and we have highlighted only a few Scriptures about the riches or what we possess, what is ours, what the Christian life pays, not what it costs. And all of us certainly in studying this particular portion should be filled with joy and filled with thanksgiving as we contemplate these things.

Now let me take you back to verse 4 and remind you that it all began with the phrase "and coming to Him." It is in coming to Christ that we are made rich. It is in coming to Christ that all spiritual privilege becomes ours, that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And I remember vividly also the words of Romans chapter 2 verse 4, "Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness?" My, in coming to Him we must think greatly and deeply and widely about the riches of His kindness granted to us.

So with that in verse 4 Peter introduces quite a few spiritual privileges. And I have been telling you, it's like a kaleidoscope, you keep turning it and each time you turn it it shows you a rearrangement of the same great spiritual jewels into a lovely image that is unseen in each arrangement, unique to each one.

First of all we noted that one of the privileges is union with Christ, union with our Lord in verse 5. A second one, access to our Lord in verse 5. And we note there that we as living stones are being built up, that's the union. And then we are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, that's the access. And then the third of these spiritual privileges, security in our Lord, verse 6 says that he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed. He will never fail us, we are secure in Him. Then fourthly,

affection for our Lord. Verse 7, this precious value, or this preciousness then is for you who believe. What does he mean? Christ is precious to those who believe. In fact the best way I believe to translate the Greek is, "To you who believe He is precious." So we have the privilege of union, access, security and affection. We are allowed the great privilege of loving the Lord Jesus Christ, as Peter puts it, whom having not seen you love. And we have been granted that great privilege by the goodness and the grace of God. In fact, in Ephesians 6:24 it says, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible." What a privilege.

And I posed the question last time and I would pose it again: is there anything as joyous as the joy of love? Is there any emotion as fulfilling as love? As exhilarating as love? And then how wonderful it is to be given the privilege to love the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter says in verses 7 and 8 that the cornerstone whom the world rejects, we adore. He is precious to us. For those who disbelieve the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very cornerstone and to them a stone of stumbling and rock of offense and because of disobedience they are literally appointed to doom and crushed by that very stone they reject. But on the other hand, we have this incredible undeserved privilege of being loved by the Lord and of loving Him in return. And so we have affection in our Lord. Affection is one of the great spiritual privileges. Only believers truly value Jesus Christ. Only to us is He beloved. Only to us is He precious. Only to us is He prized above all. Only to us is He priceless.

On the other hand, to unbelievers who are disobedient, they have no love for Christ. And they are doomed by that disbelief. They are doomed by that disobedience. They are doomed by that lack of love. All three of those things being the demonstration of their unregenerate state. In 1 Corinthians 16:22 Paul puts it this way, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed." The unbeliever does not love the Lord, therefore does not have desire to obey the Lord, does not believe in the Lord. Just the opposite is true of us.

Now let me take you to a fifth great principle, verse 9. To add to our list let's add this one...chosen by our Lord...chosen by our Lord. Verse 9 gives us almost a staccato repetition of these various spiritual privilege. The first one is, "But you are a chosen race...but you are a chosen race." By the way, the Greek in this particular verse is emphatic, it's an emphatic adversative, I guess we could call it. He is talking about the doom of those who are sentenced to hell because of disobedience and a failure to love Christ. And then he says, "But..." in a very strong term..."on the other hand, you are a chosen race." Unlike those who are destined for destruction because of their rejection of Christ, because of their disbelief, because of their failure to value Him as precious, you on the other hand are a chosen genos, a chosen race. And the term genos from which we get the word "generate" speaks of source. And so it emphasizes the fact that we are a race produced from a source, from a life source and namely God. We are a chosen race, we are an elect race coming from a special source, namely God.

Now, by the way, we've been noting all the way through here that Peter is reaching back and touching Old Testament texts. We have quoted them a number of times. He alluded to Old Testament

passages in verses 4 and 5. He directly quotes them in verses 6, 7 and 8. And now again he is reaching back in verse 9 to touch Old Testament passages. And when he says we are a chosen race, he is going all the way back to Deuteronomy chapter 7. And in Deuteronomy chapter 7 we read this in verse 6, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God."

And so here we find that way back in Deuteronomy 7, Israel is said to be chosen by God. And it is that text, no doubt, that is in the mind of Peter as he pens these verses. He is seeing the church now, the redeemed community of God as chosen just as Israel of old had been chosen by God for special purpose within His plan.

In Isaiah, I would just draw you to another Old Testament passage that can be compared, Isaiah chapter 43 verse 21. It says again of Israel, "The people whom I formed for Myself...the people whom I formed for Myself." God identifies His people Israel as chosen people. In fact that's pretty much been the moniker that they have had all through the years. They have been known as the chosen people. But now there is a new chosen race, a chosen genos, a people that have come out of the life source of God Himself having been chosen by God.

Go back to 1 Peter chapter 1 for a moment and remind yourself of verse 1 and 2. At the end of verse 1, having identified the aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, he says of them, these Christians, that they are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. And here he says that believers are chosen.

Now if you do not remember or were not here when we went over those two verses, let me say this to you. The study we did on election from 1 Peter 1:1 and 2 may be one of the most important ones ever done in the history of this church. And I would encourage you to go back to that particular tape and carefully go through the three tapes that we did on this matter of election. Why? Because it is absolutely essential for us to know that we are Christians because we have been chosen by God, chosen by God. This is the most incredible privilege of all. And you want to celebrate it in its fullness. So I encourage you, go back and reexamine those great things that we discussed. You see it is out of being chosen that all other privileges flow. You were chosen, that is repeated over and over again in Scripture. And I want to just pass it by you for the cementing of your thinking. Just listen, don't try to write these things down, but just listen to the cacophony of words that come out of Scripture repeating this great truth...over and over and over again we read that we have been chosen by God.

John 15:16, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Who appointed them to eternal life and thus they believed? God appointed them to eternal life.

In Romans chapter 9 and these are not all of the verses but just to give you the feeling for the way Scripture handles it, it says in Romans chapter 9 verse 13, "Jacob I love, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then, there is no injustice with God is there? May it never be. For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy."

Romans chapter 11 and verse 5, "In the same way then there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice." First Corinthians chapter 1 verse 9, "God is faithful through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son." You were called by God into fellowship with His Son. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. He predestined us to adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself."

First Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 4, "Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, His choice of you." Second Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." It couldn't be any clearer than that. God has chosen you.

Second Timothy chapter 1 verse 9, "Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

Chapter 2 verse 10, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." You come passing by some other Scriptures to familiar echoes in the book of Revelation. Listen to Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8, "And all who dwell on the earth will worship Him. Everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who has been slain." The names of the chosen written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, God chose us, He chose us in eternity, He chose us before the world began. He repeats it in Revelation 17 and verse 8 and in Revelation 20 and verse 15, "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire." And when were the names written? "Before the foundation of the world."

And so, over and over and over again the testimony of Scripture is that we were chosen...chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ by God. Why? Because we were great? No, because He sovereignly determined to set His love upon us for His own holy purposes which we may never fully understand. You say, "Well didn't He do it by foreknowledge? Doesn't it say in 1 Peter 1:2, according to the foreknowledge of God?" Yes it does. The question is, what does it mean? Some people say, "Well it just means that He knew before what we were going to do. And so in knowing before what we were going to do He chose us on the basis of that knowledge." Or, "He had anticipated by the nature which He had built into us what we would do and thus chose regarding our future."

That's not true. That's not what foreknowledge means. Foreknowledge is a deliberate choice. In fact, in some ways it's an unfortunate translation. It means a deliberate choice. It does not mean that God looks ahead and knows what we're going to do and then acts. And we went into that in great detail as we examined the Word of God.

Perhaps the most important...the most important verse we looked at was right there in 1 Peter 2:6 where it says, "I lay in Zion a choice stone, a chosen stone," and we have been chosen elect, predestined in the same way Christ was chosen by God to fulfill a holy purpose. So have we been chosen, Christ Mine elect, the church Mine elect. Isaiah 42:1, "Behold My servant, My chosen one in whom My soul delights."

Now God certainly didn't look down history and say, "Oh, I see, a man named Jesus will be born and a man named Jesus will do certain things so I'll choose Him." Not on your life. He is chosen, we are chosen. He is chosen by the absolute sovereignty of God, we are chosen by the absolute sovereignty of God. It is not a question of God looking down through history and then choosing on the basis of what we will do by our own will, not at all.

In fact, if God is looking down some long telescope into the future and waiting for us to act then that makes man sovereign, that gives man the credit for his own faith. That assumes that man can and does seek God. That makes salvation a human work and relegates God to a secondclass deity who can't get as much glory as we deserve. And all of those are violently contrary to everything Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that God is sovereign, not man. That man cannot have any credit for believing. That man cannot and does not seek God. That salvation is not a human work at all and that God is never a victim of the choices of men. He is sovereign, we are chosen.

Jeremiah was chosen before he was even born, out of his mother's womb. And so we've been chosen. That great spiritual privilege, is that not a mindboggling privilege? You say, "Well, you mean I'm a Christian because God chose me before the foundation of the world?" Yes, and that salvation choice was activated when the Spirit of God moved your heart to believe. Your being chosen does not come to reality without your faith, but that too is the work of the Spirit. And this particular spiritual

privilege is the most pridecrushing truth of Scripture. It devastates our pride. It crushes us because nothing in our salvation has anything to do with us. We were moved by the power of God, having been chosen. It is the most pridecrushing doctrine in Scripture.

Secondly, it's the most Godexalting doctrine because it's all of God...all of God...all of God. Thirdly, it's the most holinesspromoting doctrine. Why? Because we ought to be so grateful that we will live for Him at any price. We ought to be so thankful that it would consume us with a passion for obedience. Furthermore, the doctrine of the sovereign choice of God should be the most strengthgiving doctrine. Why? Because it would bring peace to every situation. We know we are the chosen of God, that choice is eternal, that choice is unequivocal. It cannot change. It cannot be altered and that should bring peace to every situation. And, frankly, not only is it the most pridecrushing, Godexalting, holinesspromoting, strengthgiving but it is the most joyproducing spiritual privilege. Why? Because it's the only hope for wretched sinners. And if I'm thankful for anything, above all things I'm thankful that He chose me, aren't you? And so, to be chosen by God, chosen by our Lord, what a spiritual privilege. What a spiritual privilege.

One more, as we continue to look at our spiritual privileges, Peter selects another Old Testament privilege. He says not only are you a chosen race, verse 9, but a royal priesthood...a royal priesthood. The emphasis here is on the royal. The priesthood has already been discussed in verse 5. We went into that in great detail. We spent two full weeks on what it means to be a priest. But here he's talking about a royal priesthood. That is really unique. Priests are one thing, kings are another thing. To combine the two is remarkable. What a spiritual privilege.

But he drew this from Exodus chapter 19 verse 6. "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, He says to Israel." You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests...royal priests. The fact is, this is really sad, the fact is Israel forfeited that privilege. A priest to offer sacrifices to God, a king to rule, to have dominion. So let's call point number six dominion with our Lord. That's the sixth privilege...dominion with our Lord.

Israel sinned. Israel forfeited the privilege. Israel was never able to realize the dominion. God had promised them a kingdom. God had promised them they would rule. They never saw it. They never experienced it. They forfeited it because of their apostasy and because they executed the Messiah. But now he says to the church, you are My new royal priesthood. Not just priests, but royal priests.

Now what does that mean? Well it could mean two things. A priesthood belonging to and in the service of the king, then it would be a royal priesthood...one that served the king. But it's more than that, it is that, but there's a second thought here. A royal priesthood would not only be a priesthood that belonged to and served the king, but secondly, it would be a priesthood that exercised dominion and rule. We do not just serve a King, we reign with the King. We are a royal priesthood because we are the priests of the King and we are a royal priesthood because we as priests rule with the King.

This is marvelous.

Now that word "royal" needs our attention from a little technical angle for a moment. It is the word *basileion*. It generally has the sense of a royal palace, a royal residence. It can mean sovereignty. It can mean a crown. It can mean a monarchy. It can mean even a palace, as I noted. But the whole idea here is just royalty in general. The spiritual house that is being built in verse 5, you see where it says we are built up a spiritual house? The spiritual house being built in a sense turns out to be a royal house. When we talk about that we don't mean a building, do we? We talk about the Royal House of England, or the Royal House of France, or the Royal House of any other nation in the past, we don't mean a building. We call it a house, it's really a sphere of dominion. It's a family of rulers, and that's exactly the way Peter uses it here. We are a priesthood with dominion. We are a ruling priesthood. We are a royal house of priests, kings and priests. In fact, I like to translate it "a royal house of priests," that's the idea...a royal house of priests. What a great privilege. It would be privilege enough to be a priest, but to be a royal priest?

Revelation 1:6 mentions it that we are a kingdom of priests. Revelation 5:10, "Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth." And Revelation chapter 20, I think it's verse 6 says essentially the same thing, where John writes, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection and over these the second death has no power but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him." We are reigning priests.

Now this is unique. I'll tell you why it's unique. There is only one person who can establish such a house and that is the only one who was the true priest and the true king, who's that? Christ. He is both king and priest. He is a royal priest, He is a priestly king. And because we are one with Christ, because we have entered into union with Him we inherit the nature of His priesthood. And His priesthood is very unique. Listen to Hebrews 7:14, "It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests." There were no priests in the tribe of Judah. "And this is clearer still if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement but according to the power of an indestructible life, for it is witnessed of him, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." And Melchizedek was a royal priest, a model of a royal priesthood in the Old Testament. Christ is a royal priest. He didn't inherit His priesthood by coming through the priestly line, He came through the royal line of Judah and was established as a royal priest. And because we are linked with Christ, we too are royal priests. And we will have dominion. We will rule with Him. And our future is that of ruling.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul says to the Corinthians, and this is just almost incredulous, he says, "Does anyone of you when he has a case against his brother dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?" He says, do you have the audacity as Christians to go before some earthly court to settle your differences? "Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" Why aren't

you going before believers? They're going to judge the world, they're going to reign with Christ. "And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more matters of this life?"

Now if you want to know what your future is, you're going to be a royal priest. You're going to spend eternity giving offerings to the Lord God. But you're also going to reign. You're going to have dominion over the dimensions of heavenly existence that God assigns to you and you're even going to rule over angels. Dominion, royal priesthood.

There is no man between us and the Lord, we are priests. And there is no one over us but the Lord, we are kings. Now that's far above anything you find in the Levitical priesthood, far above anything you find in the Aaronic priesthood. This is a royal kingly priesthood. A great privilege...a great privilege.

What are our privileges? Union with Him, access to Him, security in Him, affection for Him, election by Him, dominion with Him. The next one's the one I really wanted to get to. I will, next week.

Beloved, as we at this particular point contemplate our spiritual privileges, let me ask you a question. Does this make you grateful for what God has done? Then let me ask you to translate that gratitude in to two things. One is thanks, two is confession. If you are grateful for what spiritual privileges have freely been given to you because you were chosen, then lift your heart in thankful praise to God and confess your sin which demonstrate such ingratitude and thus prepare yourself for the Lord's table, a table of confession and a table of celebration. Let's bow together.

Our Father, as we come now to this time of remembrance, of looking at the death of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, we've been talking about privileges. We've been talking about what it pays, help us to see what it costs. What it cost the lovely Lord Jesus...what it cost You as You turned Your back on Him...what it cost the holy angels, no doubt, in the pain of seeing the perfect one bearing sin. And, Lord, may we not only see what it costs but may we see how tritely we treat that cost, how often we don't say thanks for the privileges purchased at such a price. How often we entertain sin in our lives, mocking the very cross where Jesus died.

Now, Lord, as we take the cup and the bread and in those lovely vivid symbols are refreshed again to see the cross, to be reminded of the body which was prepared for Him to die for us, to be reminded of the blood which was shed as an outpouring as a sacrifice in our place. May we see that the cost was to purchase all the riches for us and, Lord, may we be thankful. Fill our hearts with praise and cause us to confess those sins which show our deep ingratitude, which show our lack of love to one who gave His all for us.

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