

# Rights in Christ

by Daniel Steele

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and claiming our rights in Christ, including the right to salvation, sanctification, and eternal life.*

**Scripture:** John 1:12, John 16:23, John 17:3, Romans 8:11, Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 1:9, Revelation 22:14

**Topics:** "Rights In Christ", "Prayer And Faith"

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## Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the concept of rights in Christ, distinguishing between natural rights and gracious rights. He explains how believers are invested with inalienable rights through Christ's atoning merit, such as repentance, belief in Christ, and eternal life. Steele emphasizes the importance of claiming and exercising these rights, grounded in faith and the name of Jesus, to receive blessings and the fullness of the Spirit. He encourages believers to boldly approach the throne of grace, understanding their rights in Christ and the power of His name in prayer.

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## Transcript

A RIGHT is that which justly belongs to one; that which he may properly demand as his own. There is always a corresponding obligation on the part of all other persons to abstain from infringing this right. I have natural rights. By the will of my Creator I have a right to life, liberty, property, reputation, marriage, [See Whewell's "Elements of Morality," vol. 1.] which may all be forfeited by the commission of a capital crime.

I have gracious rights. In Christ, by virtue of His atoning merit, all men are invested with rights as inalienable as the great natural rights enumerated above. These are, ability to repent, power to believe in Christ, pardon, adoption, the witness of the Spirit, regeneration, sanctification, and the glorification of the soul and body united in eternal life. These are all comprised in the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, my right through Christ; for even the saints' resurrection is "BECAUSE of His Spirit dwelling in you" (Rom. viii. 11). (See critical Greek MSS). The whole race will be raised because Jesus is the conqueror of death; but there is an additional reason why believers shall be raised. Their bodies have been temples of the Holy Spirit.

These are not natural rights, inasmuch as they did not exist till purchased for me by Jesus, my adorable Saviour. But now that His shed blood stands as the eternal price of my eternal redemption, through faith I am invested with a right to that redemption, and to all that is a requisite preparation for it. The Father, by solemn oath, has taken upon Himself the obligation to pardon, sanctify, and save eternally all who

persistently claim their rights in Christ Jesus. This explains the transaction between the Father and the Son, alluded to by Jesus in His high-priestly address to the Father in John xvii. 2. A study of the original beautifully shows that the whole mass of humanity is intrusted to the Son for redemption, and that the Father has bound Himself to give eternal life to all who claim their rights in Christ, or, in Scripture phrase, "as many as Thou hast given Him" through the drawings of the cross, freely yielded to under the suaves of the Holy Spirit. [\* See Bengel's Gnomon."] From the very nature of rights, they cannot be forced upon a person against his will. He must freely accept them or freely disclaim them. If the millionaire cannot divest himself of his money, then his money owns him instead of his owning the money. Gracious rights are always free. Constraint strikes at their very essence.

Thus the poet Holmes compares the free agent who abuses his right. and the one who properly uses it, to two raindrops falling side by side on the top of a mountain, the one running down the northward slope toward the polar regions, and the other coursing toward the sunny south.

"So from the heights of will

Life's parting stream descends,

And, as a moment turns its slender rill,

Each widening torrent bends.

"From the same cradle's side,

From the same mother's knee

One to long darkness and the frozen tide,

One to the peaceful sea!"

But, after all, am I not mistaken about my rights in Christ? Have I a "Thus saith the Lord" for this doctrine? See John i. 12. marginal reading: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the RIGHT to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His NAME." Here our right to sonship and the name of Jesus are blessedly interlinked by our faith. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have RIGHT to the tree of life" (Rev. xxii. 14). This implies a right of way to that tree of life, that sanctification of heart requisite for the inheritance of the saints in light. A kind father will not mock his son by giving him a title to a part of the homestead, and then deny him all rightful access thereto. "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and JUST to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John i, 9). Thus, in addition to the obligation of veracity expressed in the adjective "faithful," there is the obligation of justice implied in the word "just," a jural term, involving obligations on God's part and rights on ours. It would be injustice in God to withhold pardon and cleansing from a soul truly abhorring sin, and fleeing to the blood of sprinkling.

"The pardon of sin," says an old English divine, "is not merely an act of mercy, but also an act of justice in God. Justice itself is brought over, from being a formidable adversary, to be our party, and to plead for us." President Edwards uses the following strong language: "The justice of God that [irrespective of the strong atonement] require man's damnation, and seemed inconsistent with his salvation, now [having respect to the atonement] as much requires the salvation of those that believe in Christ, as ever it before required their damnation. Salvation is an absolute debt to the believer on the ground of what His Surety has done."

1. This fact of rights in Christ gives cogency to the exhortation to accept Him. A right must be claimed and exercised, or it will be lost forever. That investment in the savings bank will be worthless to you if you never claim it. If your heirs are wiser than you, they may derive benefit from it. An unappropriated Christ is no Saviour. All our rights in Christ may be forfeited by the capital offence -- the sin against the Holy Ghost.

2. The great value of the name of Jesus and the necessity of prayer in that name. All our rights inhere in Him. He has withdrawn His visible presence from our eyes, but, like a wise and benevolent king, He has left His signet ring behind Him for the use of His cabinet, so that the government can be administered as if present in person. The name of Jesus is His signet ring. I may stamp that name upon all my petitions, and secure that for which I pray. I must prevail in every suit in which I can identify myself with the glory of Jesus. When self asserts itself, and asks for any thing not for the glory of Christ, I cannot use the name of Jesus. Thus that name is at once the ground of my rights with God and the limit of these rights. Hence Jesus' name is the only limit to the "whatsoever" in John xvi. 23: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." Says Alford, "It was impossible, up to the time of the glorification of Jesus, to pray to the Father in His name." It is a fullness of joy peculiar to the dispensation of the Spirit to be able so to do. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). How glorious the hour when Jesus transferred His precious signet ring to the hands of His disciples! This was not at the beginning of His ministry, when He taught them the Lord's prayer, for His death had not yet clothed His name with that peculiar power with which it is now invested. But in the last week of His earthly life, when within a step of Calvary's cross, in anticipation of His glorification, He placed this precious deposit, this instrument of power, this long end of the lever that moves the very throne of the Father, in the hands of His disciples, saying, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing IN MY NAME; ask and receive, that your joy may be full." This momentous hour has not sufficiently attracted the eye of the Church. The brilliancy of the other great events crowded into the last days of Christ's earthly history, the scenes of Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Calvary, the resurrection and ascension, have eclipsed this important moment with excessive light, as the Sun's splendors obscure the planet Mercury. O ye believers in Jesus, magnify the hour when He transferred to your hands His sceptre of power in heaven and on the earth, saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Henceforth your sanctified will is to be a force which shall influence the moral government of God, and hasten the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Then no more think meanly of your privileges, yea, rather, your rights, conferred by our glorious Redeemer, who hath made you kings and priests unto God -- kings, because He has given you His throne by promise, and His signet ring by possession; and priests, because you have the right of access in person into the holy of holies through the blood of Jesus.

A half-starved old Indian once came into a frontier settlement, begging for food. He said that he had no money, but he had one thing about his person which he had carried for nearly a half century. Being urged to exhibit his treasure, he drew from his bosom a small case of deerskin, in which was found enclosed an honorable discharge from the Continental army, signed by GEORGE WASHINGTON. That name, so influential with the American people, this poor red man had carried, all ignorant of its potency to unlock the hearts of white men, and to prove his right to a pension. How many a hungry, fainting Christian is carrying the precious name of Jesus carefully folded in a napkin, instead of spreading it out before the throne of the Father as his prevailing plea for that fullness of the Spirit to which that name entitles him -- a pension of grace here, and bounty lands in heaven hereafter!

"Thy mighty name salvation is,

And keeps my happy soul above;  
Comfort it brings, and power, and peace,  
And joy, and everlasting love:  
To me, with Thy great name, are given  
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven."

3. Appropriating faith. There is much energy wasted in asking for the fullness of the Spirit, which ought to be expended in simply receiving. Believing is appropriating the general promises, and making them your own by asserting your right to them in the name of Jesus. The Comforter is already sent. Make room for Him in your heart by a thorough consecration to Christ. Simple trust is the only door through which God can come into His temple, your heart. He cannot enter through your senses, because He is a Spirit; nor through your reason, because it grasps only relations and not realities. Your faith alone can touch God, and unveil Him to your spiritual perceptions. Then, and then only, does He really become your God.

In this intuitive knowledge of God and of Christ is eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). Hence St. Paul says: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Charles Wesley is right in his estimate of the comparative worthlessness of all mere intellectual treasures: --

"Other knowledge I disdain;

'Tis all but vanity;

Christ, the Lamb of God was slain --

He tasted death FOR ME."

There is a time when prayer should give place to faith. Jesus said to the nobleman, "Go, thy son liveth." Continued prayer to Jesus to come down to Capernaum and heal the son, or to give a token that he would be healed, was now an impertinence and an act of disrespect to our Lord. There was only one honorable course -- trust instead of repeated petition. The nobleman trusted when he had received the promise. Much more should believers trust for the abiding Comforter, seeing that they have the promise of the Father, actually fulfilled in the Holy Spirit, urged upon their acceptance. All they are required to do is to receive Him, to take the water of life freely; not to pump, nor to draw with buckets. It is a fountain full and overflowing. It is the duty of the Jew not to pray for the Messiah to come, but to recognize the Nazarene. It is the duty of the Christian, not to pray for the accomplished outpouring of the Spirit, but to accept the pentecostal gift, and thus honour the third Person of the Trinity, who has already inaugurated His dispensation.

4. Boldness in our approach to the throne of grace is grounded on this knowledge of our rights in Christ. It is the lack of this that causes so many weak and wilted believers. They never prevail in prayer because they faint before they grasp the prize. They faint because they fail to discern and claim their rights in Christ Jesus.

They have not learned the meaning of this stanza :

"No condemnation now I dread,--  
Jesus, with all in Him, is mine,  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own."

Men will contend long for their natural rights. This is the spring of much of the heroism which illumines the pages of history. Could we impress the whole Christian Church with the assurance that in the name of Jesus they have each an individual right to the undivided Comforter and Sanctifier, the Church would be suddenly transformed from a hospital to a band of conquering heroes. Courage would throb in every heart, and vigour would nerve every arm. Every one would kneel a wrestling Jacob, and, confidently say,

"Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,  
And tell me if Thy name be Love,"  
would rise a prevailing Israel, shouting,  
"'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me;  
I hear Thy whisper in my heart."

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