

On Christian Privilege

by Thomas Reade

Thomas Reade's sermon on Christian privilege emphasizes the transformative power of faith in understanding one's relationship with God and the assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 27:1, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 12:2, John 4:14, John 14:6, Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Hebrews 6:17, 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Christian Living", "Salvation Assurance"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the unveiling of great privileges of the church of God under the old and new dispensations, emphasizing the need for spiritual discernment to understand the wisdom and power of God. He highlights the journey of the convinced sinner from self-abasement and guilt to longing for salvation and discovering Jesus as the only atonement and refuge. Reade explains the believer's deepening relationship with Jesus, finding in Him wisdom, righteousness, and strength, leading to a life of holiness and happiness through faith. He concludes by pointing out the blessed assurance of faith, the peace in leaving events with God, and the future destination of believers as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Transcript

39. ON CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE

Under the old dispensation, many of the great privileges of the church of God were veiled under emblems and figures drawn from natural objects. The Psalms of David, and the writings of the Prophets, abound with the most beautiful images, to describe the power, faithfulness, and love of Jehovah. Under the new dispensation the veil is removed, and they are revealed in all their glory and beauty to the eye of faith. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. But, as in former ages, so now, the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; yes, they are foolishness unto him.

Hence the Gospel is to those who perish, foolishness; but to those who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Happy are they who are thus taught of God; for the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Man is naturally blind to his real condition, as a guilty, condemned sinner. Enjoying the pleasures of time, he never inquires after those of eternity. Satisfied with earth, he feels no desire for heaven, except as it presents to his mind an exemption from pain and suffering.

All men naturally prefer ease to pain. Hence heaven on this account is preferable to hell. Such is the estimate which wretched fallen man forms of heavenly bliss! Ignorant of himself, and ignorant of God, he is led captive by Satan at his will, until sovereign grace redeems him out of the hand of the enemy. The first truth which the divine Spirit discloses to the awakened conscience is our lost and undone state by nature. This discovery is attended with the deepest self-abasement; with brokenness of heart; with anxious desires after salvation; a salvation from present sin, as well as from future punishment.

The convinced sinner, made sensible of the guilt and burden of transgression, now longs for heaven, as a state of rest from sin, as well as a state of rest from suffering. But, alas! feeling his inability to think a good thought, and overwhelmed with the view of his iniquities, he anxiously inquires, "How shall man be just with God?" What must I do to be saved? Another precious truth, hidden from the natural man, is revealed to his opening mind by the same Spirit, who so graciously implanted in his heart that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Jesus, as exhibited in the Gospel to a dying world, is savingly manifested to the humble, trembling, believing sinner, in all his glorious offices of prophet, priest, and king. How kind is God! how full of mercy and love! When he implants a holy fear, he imparts also a principle of saving faith. Jesus is now beheld and apprehended as the sinner's only atonement, righteousness, and refuge; as the only way to the Father: and the only advocate with him. He is viewed by the eye of faith, as the chief among ten thousand.

He is esteemed precious, above all earthly or heavenly objects. Angels and men, as his creatures, sink into the shade, while the glories of Emanuel, God with us, are now seen to fill heaven and earth with their resplendent brightness. The next great secret which the Spirit reveals to those who truly fear God, is the fitness of Jesus to meet all the needs of his people. Being delighted with the perfections of the Savior, the believer is filled with admiration and gratitude at the view of their suitableness to his own personal necessities.

He now loves to contemplate his gracious Redeemer, in his two-fold character--what he is in himself--and what he is to his people. He knows how to appreciate and to apply, through the teaching of the Spirit, the excellencies of Jesus to his own soul. He comes to him daily for wisdom, righteousness, and strength. He leans wholly upon his supporting arm. He lives upon the promises of his grace, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. He delights in this way of access by faith to a mercy-seat; obtains through Jesus the blessings he needs; and thus finds him at all times his all in all.

This is happiness. This is the King's highway to heaven. This is the way in which the flock of Christ have trod in every age. Lord, lead me forth by the footsteps of the flock. Make me a follower of them, who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises. But this is not all. The sinner is not only made to see his lost estate by nature; the glories of the Redeemer; and the Savior's fitness to all his necessities but another gracious truth is unfolded to him. He is enabled to know and to rejoice in his own personal interest in all the blessedness of his purchased inheritance.

He can say with the church of old, "This is my beloved!, and this is my friend." "This God is my God." "God has become my salvation." "I know whom I have believed." How sweet is this secret of the Lord! It begets humility, gratitude, zeal, and obedience. It quickens love, and animates faith. It increases watchfulness and holy living. It lays the soul prostrate at the foot of the cross, while it elevates the affections to the pure regions where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

This glorious revelation is vouchsafed to those who truly fear God; not always in equal measure, but in such a degree, and at such times, as Infinite Love and Wisdom deems best. All the children of God should strive after this blessed assurance of faith. It is not the presumption, but the exalted privilege, of the obedient believer. Those have low views of Christian privilege, who deem it arrogant to expect the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins. All who believe with the heart unto righteousness; all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; all who walk humbly with their God, may know assuredly that their sins are blotted out; for he pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.

"Lord, be graciously pleased to give me a holy, filial fear; a humble, loving, obedient spirit; a deadness to the world; and a devotedness of heart to you; a renunciation of self, and a cordial reception of Christ, in all his saving merits and mercies. Thus, blessed Savior! let me lie passive in your hands, waiting your presence, and desirous only that your will may be accomplished in me, until it please you to call me to your kingdom above, where all darkness and doubt shall forever flee away."

Amid all these riches of grace, another secret is unfolded: that "all things shall work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." Man is naturally anxious about tomorrow. He sees all dark before him, and imagination conjures up a thousand fears. He suffers more from imagined, than from real evils. He creates a world of misery to himself, by dire forebodings and anxious glances into future days. Not so when faith, love, and filial confidence in God, his heavenly Father, fill his breast.

This gracious promise is then fulfilled: "You shall keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." Calmly he leaves events with God. He studiously performs the present duties, and leaves the consequences with him who has said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." Such is the life of faith in the Son of God. It is a life of holiness and happiness. Many, indeed, are the afflictions of the righteous; afflictions peculiar to themselves, as well as afflictions endured in common with their fellow-men; but many, also, are their supports and consolations.

These are truly peculiar to themselves; unknown and unfelt by a suffering, unbelieving world. Even here, while sojourning through a valley of tears, they partake of the "hidden manna," and draw many a refreshing draught from the fountain of living waters. But their blessedness does not end here. The glorious secret, which gladdens their hearts under all their sorrows, is their future destination. They shall be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." They shall "sit down with Christ on his throne," and "reign with him forever and ever."

What heart can conceive the felicity of the redeemed, when all terrestrial things shall have passed away! "Lord, make me a tree of righteousness, and then I shall experience your heavenly beams of love! Should the rough wind of persecution, or needful trials, shake my branches, or even tear away many valued comforts, yet may I, under every bereavement, repose on your faithfulness and rejoice in your love." As God in Christ is the fountain of all felicity, infinitely happy in himself, and the source of true felicity to his creatures; so their blessedness is founded on his truth, secured by his oath, and sealed by his blood; for "God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind.

So God has given us both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can take new courage, for we can

hold on to his promise with confidence. This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the line of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 6:17-20. Oh! what rich discoveries are these, which are experimentally and practically made known to all who fear God! Such happy souls may well join with the enraptured prophet, and say, "I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me." "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation. Therefore, with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation."

"Blessed Lord! reveal your truth, so full of grace and glory to my heart, in all its saving influence. Warm, yes, inflame my soul with the pure celestial fire of love. Illuminate my mind, and transform me daily more and more into your image, until, awaking up after your likeness, I shall be eternally satisfied with it." Blessed Jesus, look upon me With a smile of heavenly love; Draw my heart and fix it on thee, Never let it thence remove. Lord, I feel a sinful nature Tending downwards to the earth; Save a lost and ruined creature, Save me through the second birth.

Come, Oh great Eternal Spirit, Pour your influence over my soul; Let me now your peace inherit, Make a wounded sinner whole. Put your holy fear within me, Make your gracious secrets known, Daily may I know and love thee, Daily all your mercies own. Jesus! plead my cause in heaven; Be my advocate on high, All the praise to you be given, Through a vast eternity.

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