

Advantages of Being a Believer

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Date: 13 January 2025

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[0 : 00] The last several lessons we examined our focus was on various spiritual privileges we have as followers of Christ.

So far is our security in Christ, the affection we have for Christ, our election by Christ, and our dominion with Christ.

We're going to pick it up this evening in 1 Peter chapter 2 and in verse 9 and 10.

And we've studied part of this already, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, once you were not a people, but now you are God's people, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

I can buy into that mercy business. There are so many spiritual privileges in this portion of Scripture.

[1 : 51] I fear we'll leave some out unintentionally. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

And because of all that, we can proclaim the excellencies of God. In the gospel of Christ, we come face to face with the cost of following Jesus.

And I'm well aware of that, being on the board of directors of Voice of the Martyrs. We tend to hear of those costs every week.

But in the 21st century, I fear we really think of those costs. In Luke 9, verses 23-26, the Lord had this to say, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

[3 : 27] For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of his holy angels.

For whoever is ashamed of his holy angels. People that the Lord has saved understand that there is a cost in living the Christian life.

We're even told that we should assess the cost of following the Lord. We read this in Luke chapter 14, verse 27 and on.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish.

[4 : 49] Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000.

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

The cost of discipleship is covered in many passages in the New Testament. But when we come to the epistle of 1 Peter, the Holy Spirit puts a new twist on following Christ.

He does not refer to this as the cost, but rather the privilege. And that is why we've been looking at the last several weeks, spiritual privileges.

Now we're going to be concluding our study of this portion of Scripture tonight. And we're going to do so by looking at five additional advantages that believers possess.

[6 : 21] Our separation to Christ. Our possession by Christ. Illumination in Christ.

Compassion from Christ. And the proclamation of Christ. And the first thing we're going to look at is separation to Christ.

In 1 Peter 2, verse 9c, we're called a holy nation. And Peter is undoubtedly referring to a passage in Exodus.

Being a Jew, they were experts on a lot of the Old Testament. And in Exodus 19.6, it says this, You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Believers are separated unto Christ as a holy nation. That word nation is interesting.

[7 : 29] It's translated from the word *ethnos*, which means people of an ethnic group. Holy means, of course, separate or set apart.

Even the church, the *ecclesia* is the set apart ones. In the Old Testament, God's people were often referred to as the set apart ones or a holy nation.

But Israel had forfeited much of this because of sin and unbelief. Only when Israel turns to the true Messiah, and that's Jesus Christ, will they once again be God's holy people.

Now, one day, and I think not too far off, Israel will be totally and perfectly sanctified and made holy. The church today enjoys positional sanctification, and that makes us a holy nation. That is because the Lord has imputed to every true believer His own righteousness to them.

[8 : 53] We, as followers of Christ, possess His righteousness. That is our position in Him. Now, practically speaking, we are still progressing in holiness by the work of the indwelling Spirit of God.

So it's not a finished work. One day, we will be perfectly holy by the work of the Spirit. Well, we have another advantage.

Possession by Christ. In 1 Peter 2, verse 9, it says, we are a people for His own possession.

And we read this also in Exodus, chapter 19, in verse 5, Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples.

for all the earth is Mine. The word possession there is quite interesting. It means to acquire for a price.

[10 : 18] It's going to cost something. We know we have been sovereignly appointed by the Father. That is why we believe.

We also know that the price of redemption was paid by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. And the Holy Spirit brought all who believe to new life through conviction of sin and faith in the Savior.

All believers, all believers, belong to God who has redeemed them.

in the 19th century, a hymn writer wrote this. He said, I am His and He is Mine. His forever, only His, who the Lord and Me shall part.

Ah, with what a rest of bliss Christ can fill the loving heart. heaven and earth may fade and flee firstborn light and gloom decline, but while God and I shall be, I am His and He is Mine.

[11 : 37] So the next advantage we have is illumination in Christ. It says again in verse 9 of 1 Peter 2, it is God who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We've been called into the light of God. It can be said that in this fallen world, the unsaved face two types of darkness.

One type is intellectual and the other type is moral. So we have intellectual darkness and that's generated by ignorance and there's plenty of that to go around.

That is the inability to see and know the truth. Moral darkness is generated by immorality. That is the inability to see and do what is right.

The darkness that Peter speaks of in this portion of Scripture applies to unbelievers and they are trapped in spiritual darkness brought on by the darkness generated by Satan.

[12 : 57] He's the God little g of darkness. This is a deep darkness. This is a suffocating darkness. It can be argued that unbelievers are children born in the darkness.

They walk in the darkness. They love the darkness. The words of Christ in John chapter 3 are quite instructive here.

John chapter 3 verse 19 and 20. And this is the judgment. Light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light.

Why would people love darkness? Well, it tells us. Because their works were evil. For everyone who does wickedly hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed. Why? He really didn't want the Lord to see his works. Well, the Lord has already seen them. It is helpful to remember at this point that the Lord Jesus called every believer out of darkness.

[14 : 29] He did that sovereignly, powerfully, and effectually. the great positive here is that when the Lord called us out of darkness, at the same time he called us into his marvelous light.

Paul speaks about this in his prolific writings in Colossians chapter 1 verse 13. He said this, he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. And that word delivered there is the word rescue. I did a word study one time in the Psalms and there's 37 references to being rescued by the Lord.

When we are saved, the Lord illumines our minds so we are able then to discern truth. At the same time he changes us so we can take what we now understand to be truth, what Dr.

Schaefer used to call true truth, we can take that and use it and fit it to our life situation. take God's truth and apply it to our lives.

[16 : 01] And we have a fourth advantage in our relationship with the Lord. We receive compassion from Christ.

1 Peter chapter 2 verse 10. Once you were not a people. but now you are God's people.

Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Peter received a great deal of information on compassion by looking at and reading the Old Testament book of Hosea.

I mean, when's the last time you were in Hosea? You know, some of you probably were. it's been a while for me. Hosea says this, she conceived and bore a daughter.

And the Lord said, call her name No Mercy. Isn't that a funny name? Call her No Mercy. For I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel to forgive them at all.

[17 : 24] but I will have mercy on the house of Judah and I will save them by the Lord their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.

When she had weaned no mercy, she conceived and bore a son and the Lord said, call his name not my people. Wow, Lord, where do you come up with these names?

For you are not my people. I'm not your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea which cannot be measured and it cannot be numbered.

And in the place where it was said to them you are not my people it shall be said to them now you are children of the living God. Some versions of the Hebrew for that word no mercy they use the word lo ruhamah which means in Hebrew no mercy.

And it also uses the word lo ami which means not my people. according to this passage in Hosea the time was approaching when the Jews would no longer receive compassion from God.

[19 : 04] It had to have set off some alarm bells I would think. Compassion is running out. This was directly fulfilled in the judgment that came on the northern kingdom when the Assyrians invaded.

The Assyrians were not a merciful people. And God used them to judge Israel. That occurred by the way in 722 BC. But there's another time coming and it actually we can say in all likelihood is approaching our generation with every tick of the clock.

It's during the millennial reign of Christ the Lord. Millennial means thousand year reign. And the Lord will have compassion on the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah.

Numbers of them beyond counting will be saved. And this has been written about in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and by Paul in Romans.

A lot of them will be saved. And of course we know that during the millennial reign millions of people are going to be saved. And they're going to be led to Christ by 144,000 Jewish witnesses.

[20 : 41] 144,000 Peters and Paul are going to be walking the earth, sharing the gospel, the good news. Well, in the scriptures there are two types of mercy.

First, we see God's general mercy that is providentially extended to all creation. In this type of mercy, God is patient toward lost sinners.

Famous passage, it rains on the just and the unjust. God gives rain to the just and to the unjust. But God is patient toward the lost.

At present, one could argue that God is not exercising mercy toward the people of California with fires raging out there. Yet, we know that if God so chose, He could turn that entire state into a burned out cinder.

Wouldn't be anything for Him to do that. He has every right to destroy them because of their sinfulness. But this general mercy has limits.

[21 : 55] And the time of such mercy will run day run out. There's another type of mercy, a little closer to home.

that is the mercy displayed upon the people of God. That does not mean that the saved are more deserving than others.

Sometimes we're less deserving. This mercy is granted to the saved as an act of rescuing them from the judgment that is coming.

And the last advantage we're going to look at this evening is the proclamation of Christ. 1 Peter 2.9 toward the end of that verse that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him.

We have been granted great advantages so that we can go out to the whole world and proclaim the excellencies of Christ.

[23 : 08] That word proclaim is only used here in 1 Peter not anywhere else in the New Testament. It means to publish or advertise something.

Well, what does that mean? We have the privilege of telling the world that Christ Jesus has the power to accomplish the great work of redemption.

We can announce that to the world. We cannot understate the privilege of God using undeserving sinners to be used by God to introduce lost people to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Paul saw this very clearly and he wrote down these inspired words. They're actually found in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 12 to 17.

18. I thank him who has given me strength Christ Jesus our Lord because he judged me faithful appointing me to his service though formerly I was a blasphemer a persecutor and an insolent opponent of Christ.

[24 : 46] We remember those days of Paul don't we? He was out murdering Christians. Participated in the death of the first martyr Stephen. And then he goes on and he says but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

But I received mercy. This is Paul. But I received mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost sinner Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

To the king of the ages immortal invisible the only God to honor and be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. You ever think you're the foremost sinner like I do? Paul was until I came along. There's a little footnote in your Bible that says Tom Holland has taken his place.

[26 : 29] It's easy to feel that way. It's very easy to feel that way. Let's close with a word of prayer. Father in the name of Jesus where we receive mercy and grace we thank you Lord for your word.

It's perfect without any mixture of error. Lord we thank you that this grace has been exercised toward us that while even when we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

He went to the cross endured the shame of the cross took our place on the cross and died Lord that we might receive life and indeed receive eternal life.

Lord be with us this week. Be patient with us and loving and compassionate and merciful. Lord may we have an opportunity to share the good news with others.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.