

# The Christian Life: Duty or Privilege?

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Date: 18 November 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to be in 1 Peter chapter 2.

! Just a thought-provoking question.

Is the Christian life a spiritual duty or a spiritual privilege? And that's a type of question that takes some thought. It touches deep into the Christian experience.

And it really embraces the very definition of what it means to be a Christian or a believer. Now, to look at this complex idea of just what is a Christian, we're not going to go very far into the second chapter of 1 Peter.

We covered three verses last time and two verses tonight. But these are the two verses, verse 4 and 5, we're going to cover. As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 56 ] That's what we're going to be looking at tonight. And as so often happens in reviewing inspired Scripture, the human author and the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author, are able to convey great and very thought-provoking images in an economy of words.

God's real good at that. The truth is that as followers of Christ, we enjoy great spiritual favor that has been granted us by God the Father.

Such favor is based upon nothing we have done. It is based exclusively upon what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

And as we dig through such truths, we come face to face with the glory of Christ, which only His followers can enjoy at any meaningful depth.

Now it goes without saying, and you know whenever I say that, I'm going to say it, but it goes without saying that many people through the centuries have viewed the Christian life as one of duty.

[ 3 : 29 ] It is looked upon as a spiritual duty to the Father, to the Son, the Holy Spirit. When we look at these spiritual duties rather than spiritual privileges, I think we get on thin ice, the feelings are that when this life ends and we enter into eternity, both privileges and duties will disappear.

But in fact, the fact is that duty and privilege join together in the eternal realm.

In the presence of the Godhead in eternal life, we're going to enter into perfect joy, peace, wholeness, harmony, unity.

We're going to rest along with great knowledge and wisdom. Death, pain, and illness will disappear.

I think that is why most people conclude that such conditions support the belief that all is privilege and duties are no more. But in truth, heaven is both privilege and duty.

[ 4 : 59 ] They're joined together in a perfect balance that will result in worship at a level we've not experienced in this life.

in addition to worship, we will have the great privilege of serving Christ, our Lord, and exalting Him forever.

We'll have many privileges in heaven, but in truth, many of those privileges already exist in our present condition as we await the return of the King.

So the first question we're going to look at this evening is, when did spiritual privileges begin?

Well, in verse 4, which I read to you, it says, as you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious.

[ 6 : 14 ] Now, there is great and life-altering truth in this passage. We enter into the realm of spiritual privilege by coming to Christ.

And this was really the message that the Lord brought to the earth during His incarnation. Matthew 11, verses 28 and 29 says this, Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Can you imagine finding such peace and such rest for so many troubled souls in this world? Now, the Lord capitalized on this theme often.

Listen to these very familiar words found in the Gospel of John in the critically important chapter 6. By far, one of my favorite chapters in all the Word.

[ 7 : 37 ] John 6.35, Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.

Now, talking of privilege, listen to these words from the Lord Jesus. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me. And whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.

That's verse 37 of chapter 6. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. That's John 6.44. But there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe. and who it was that would betray Him. And He said, this is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him by the Father.

[ 8 : 55 ] That's John 6.64-65. And leaving chapter 6 and going into chapter 7 of John, on the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

Whoever believes in Me, as the Scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. John 7.37-38.

Now these are all great words from our Lord Himself. But Paul gave us some great words in the book of Ephesians as we consider the realm of spiritual blessing.

Ephesians 1.3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Now I don't usually do this, but tonight your homework assignment is to keep reading Ephesians pick it up there and keep looking at that Ephesians passage.

[ 10 : 26 ] It's not hard to find. It's the first chapter of Ephesians. And cover verses 4-14. Amazing. Amazing truth that's being told there.

In our verse from 1 Peter 2.4, the word come is used. In the NSB, the word there is coming as in coming to Him. Now that is much more than the word in English meaning to draw near.

It is in fact an intense word meaning to draw near in an intimate and abiding sense. Come to me and hang around.

How long, Lord? It means to enter into lasting fellowship. In Peter's world, the word meant to experience ongoing communion with Christ.

And we know that that is a privilege that only true believers can have. Peter next says that we are to come to Christ as we would to a living stone.

[ 11 : 50 ] And Peter's use of this word is meant to convey the idea of a cornerstone. That's very important when you're building a building, including a church.

the idea of a cornerstone that is used to build the church. The church rests on this stone.

There's something both sad and unique about Christ as the living stone. This passage tells us that He has been rejected by men.

And we know that. And men still reject Him. It's amazing. I've been to a lot of countries, a country like Scotland where there was a Reformation, Switzerland a Reformation, England a Reformation. All those countries, the lights have gone out. They're dark. They're dark. Men have rejected Him.

[ 12 : 57 ] Who are the men that have rejected Christ? Well, certainly in Scripture when we study, we know that the Jewish leadership and most of the Sanhedrin rejected Him.

The Sanhedrin is interesting. That was Israel's in the day of Jesus. That was their Supreme Court, their Congress, their Senate, and their presidency.

That made up the Sanhedrin. But they rejected Christ. And I think we can include those that have rejected the Lord down to our age and time.

It is doubly evil that the Lord has been rejected when we read passages that say He is precious in the sight of God.

That speaks volumes. There's another privilege that we enjoy. And that's the privilege of union with Christ.

[ 14 : 15 ] Where He said, and I read earlier, you yourselves are like living stones. What happens to hell-bent sinners when they come to Christ as the living stone?

Well, if they're fortunate, they become living stones. That means they now share in and enjoy eternal life. Paul understood this.

Listen to his words to the Colossian church. Chapter 3, verses 3-4. For you have died. Thanks, Paul.

We need to know that. You have died. And your life is hidden with Christ and God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Father, Paul had this to say. Ephesians 2, verses 19-22.

[ 15 : 34 ] So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

in Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Now the household spoken of here was built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

They received the message from the Holy Spirit and they delivered it to the people. when we are united to Christ, we then are granted spiritual resources that will meet every spiritual need that we have.

This fact is consistent with Paul's prayer in Ephesians. Ephesians 3.20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power at work within us.

[ 17 : 19 ] So all true believers have a power in them that allows them to accomplish great things for the Lord.

Well how is this possible? because when we come to him when he receives us we become living stones in him.

Let me give you a tremendous privilege we have in Christ. we have the privilege of access to God as priests.

You ever think of yourself as a priest? We are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

That's in verse 5 in the second part B of 1 Peter 2. Mark this thought down in your mental file. Unredeemed people have no access to God.

[ 18 : 35 ] The only way they can gain access is if God is calling them to repentance and salvation. But God does not even allow unbelievers into fellowship with him unless he's doing that work of salvation in them.

Now once truly saved they are in the eternal fellowship with him. Those who know Christ and are known by him have intimate fellowship Peter was of course a believing Jew.

He realized that the old covenant was different from the new. In the old covenant the tabernacle and later the temple represented the presence of Christ.

He was in there. But in the new covenant believers are being built up a spiritual house. Listen to these words in the book of Hebrews which we studied.

Hebrews 3 6 Christ is faithful over God's house as a son and we are his house. That's inspired added in there.

[ 20 : 03 ] And we are his house. We are part of and function within a holy priesthood. Now this creates a problem.

Most people in our day think of a holy priesthood as the church in Rome which is sad to say but has really become apostate in our day.

there is a total disconnect between the Roman priesthood and what the Holy Spirit is speaking of here. As priests we have total access to God.

The great southern Baptist evangelist Vance Havner was traveling by train. That's the way preachers used to travel. There was a group of nuns on board this train.

And they were accompanied by a Catholic priest. And they served together with him. Well the priest became deathly ill.

[ 21 : 24 ] they thought he was dying. Well the nuns they fanned out within the train and were just going to anyone they could find looking for a priest.

Very important to the Catholics to administer last rites. I actually did that one time in Arlington, Texas. I didn't know it at the time. I prayed for a boy who had been shot in the chest.

He died in my arms. And his father was a bailiff in Fort Worth. And I went over there and I met with him and told him how his life was to the end.

And I said, I held him and he was struggling to breathe and I prayed for him. And he said, would you come talk to my wife? She assumes he's in hell because he didn't have any last rites.

And then the next day he came to my office and he said, I told my wife what you said. She said, you gave him his last rites. I wouldn't even believe her yet.

[ 22 : 33 ] She said, you administered last rites to him. So Dr. Havner's traveling and these nuns came up and said, we're looking for a Catholic priest.

And when they came to Dr. Havner, he said, well, I'm a priest thinking of these verses.

They said, oh, thank goodness. Would you come and pray for our father, for the father that we're traveling with? And he said, sure. He went and gave him a great evangelistic prayer.

Told him about Jesus. Told him if he died in his sins, he'd go to hell. Dr. Havner almost killed the old man. And I'm sure neither the priest nor the nuns had heard such an appeal to come to Christ.

As the story went, the priest recovered and finished the trip. So that was good news. We have another privilege.

[ 23 : 44 ] We have access to God through spiritual sacrifices. Very interesting. In 1 Peter 2 5, the third part of that verse, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, the role of the priest sacrifice was primarily to sacrifice animals to God. And I'm going to tell you, they had a whole assembly line of death.

I don't think the Ford family invented the assembly line. I think these guys did. And this went on for 1,600 years.

The Old Testament had some things to say about sacrifices. Isaiah 1, verse 11, God speaking of course, what to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?

Says the Lord, I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats.

[ 25 : 08 ] And then in the New Testament, Hebrews 10, 4, for it is impossible. Note that word. It's not difficult.

It's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. in the New Covenant, animal sacrifices were no longer necessary.

Their entire purpose was to point to Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary. If they failed to do that, they were unacceptable to God.

Now in the New Covenant found in the New Testament, there are seven spiritual sacrifices for Christians to make that are acceptable to God.

Guys, this is what you and I are supposed to be doing. These sacrifices fit hand and glove to the words of the Lord Jesus in the 14th chapter of John's Gospel.

[ 26 : 22 ] John 14 verses 13 and 14. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Now, that sounds kind of like a carte blanche statement.

That's a French term meaning you've been given a blank check. Fill it in. You can have anything you desire. When you read the totality of Scripture, you discover that it is far from a carte blanche statement.

Whatever you are asking the Lord Jesus to provide must be consistent with the person of Christ and with His kingdom plans.

When we ask the Lord for anything, it must conform to the desires of Christ even be a part of the sacrificial system, meaning we must ask with pure motives, with a goal of honoring the triune God, and if what we're asking does not conform to this, to His will, we've asked amiss and our desires will not be met.

[ 28 : 03 ] Well, what follows next are seven basic spiritual sacrifices for Christians, for you and I even in the 21st century.

They must be consistent with the offering of our bodies. Romans chapter 12 verse 1 and 2 I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Sound like R.C.

Sproul. That by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So, we are to offer our bodies. They must be a part of our praise offered to God.

[ 29 : 25 ] Hebrews 13, 15 Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

There are actually two spiritual sacrifices contained in the following passage. this is in Hebrews 13, 16. Do not neglect to do good.

There's a spiritual sacrifice, doing good. And to share, there's another one, what you have. For such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

they must include reconciled sinners. Hebrews 15, verses 15 and 16.

But on some points I've written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

[ 31 : 04 ] They must include sacrificial love. And that's for lost people as well as saved people.

Ephesians chapter 5 verses 1 and 2 Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God and then lastly our prayers must be a suitable spiritual sacrifice.

A number of verses throughout the New Testament. I chose Revelation chapter 8 verses 3 and 4

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints rose before God from the hand of the angel. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

And Father we thank you for your love your grace your mercy your forgiveness the hope we have in you centered on Christ. Lord may we be faithful when we fail bring it to our memory we can make it right through your repentance with my brothers this week and bring us back soon.

we pray in Jesus name Amen.