

“Three Privileges”

February 23, 2020

I Peter 2:1-10

I'd like to say thank you for another opportunity to open God's Word with you. A number of years ago I realized I needed much more help when I was reading the Bible. And I found this prayer which I now pray every morning right before I begin reading the Bible. “LORD, make Your Word life and truth to me so that I might know you better and live obediently.” And I think it's helping me. At least, it's showed me down so that I take more time to understand what I'm reading.”

Please open your Bible to I John chapter two.

Busy-ness. What is busy-ness? It's never being able to find the time to accomplish everything we'd like to. It's also easy to neglect filling your time with meaning and just thinking you have to fill your time.

And, it's possible that you hard time noticing how busy you are. Modern society has made it into a virtue. How many times have you heard the phrase “time is money”?

You know you're too busy when you have a panic attack when you can't find your phone. You also know you're too busy when someone offers you a better way to do something and you just don't have time for it.

Now, I do have a reason for beginning today on the topic of busy-ness. So, is it found in the Bible? I found it. I think it's the only place. Jesus has a unique way of describing busy-ness as it relates to things that are important. He said this.

Mark 4:18 “*And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as **hear the word**, (19) and the cares [anxieties] of this world [age], and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts [desires] of other things entering in, **choke the word**, and it becometh unfruitful.*”

According to Jesus, I can tell I'm too busy when I have time for the Word; but, because I've also got competition; things like anxiety, wealth, and possessions. And, according to Jesus, these sorts of things are like weeds. You've planted your garden and now your plants are being surrounded by weeds. What happens? The life of the plant is snuffed out and it's no longer able to bear fruit. Can you see how the busy-ness of modern life crowds the Bible out of your life?

So, I'll tell you what I'm learning. I'm learning that I need to take more time to just let the Bible percolate, you're your coffee used to do. You see, we're all in this together. I want to learn what Jesus means by this passage just like you do.

I've titled today's message “Three Privileges.” Join me in prayer. “LORD, make Your Word life and truth to me so that I might know you better and live obediently.”

So, I want to begin today by saying something about the effect your Bible has on you. Here's what I mean. It's good to just let the Bible make an impression on you. That's where I'd like to begin today.

Have you ever heard or used the word “atmosphere” as it pertains to what you're reading?

Here's what it is. Let's say you've received a letter, a hand-written letter, from somebody you've not heard from in a while. What happens? As you're reading it, you enter into the atmosphere of the letter. You let yourself be affected by it. You concentrate on it. You pay close attention to it because you've got a connection to the one who wrote it. So, you're really interested in what they're saying.

And, I don't think Bible reading is any different. It takes time. It calls for concentration. It's important. It's God's voice. So, when you let the *sense* of the entire paragraph impact you, you've entered into the *atmosphere* of the passage. For example, look with me at I John 2:12.

I John 2:12 *“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven [your sins have left] you for his name's sake. (13) I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

(14) I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

Here's my description of the atmosphere of this paragraph. It's what John is thinking. He's thinking about his fellow Christians. He's thinking about where they are at spiritually. He knows them. He loves them. And, some of *those*; some of *us*, are like children when it comes to walking with the LORD. Some of us are like strong, young adult men, Christians who are learning what it means to resist and overcome the wicked one. And some of us are like fathers. You've known the LORD. And, like John, you've walked with Him a long time.

Atmosphere is the sense of what the writer is saying. Can you sense the atmosphere? Can you see how important your approach to God's Word is? Can you see why it takes time to concentrate in order for the atmosphere to affect you?

I've asked myself questions over lots of passages over the years. But, folks, when you read your Bible, you're really reading God. Do you read it to see what's there? Or, are you one of those who reads it hoping that something will hit you?

Your Bible is your food for the day. Your Bible is designed, like good food, to give you strength. Do you read it so you understand it? So, every time you find a passage that makes you think, please do one thing; think. God gave you a heart to read His Word and to think carefully about what He's saying.

And, by the way, I've discovered that, when you can't really get the drift of what a passage of Scripture is saying, just think about the impression the words are making on you. When you do that, you can get the atmosphere of what you're reading.

The simplest Person to ever walk on the earth was Jesus Christ? And, is He going to complicate walking with Him? No.

So, don't complicate the Bible because Jesus isn't complicated. Read it and think about it. Look to the Author. Ask Him “LORD, what's this saying?” And don't try to force a meaning out of it. God's thoughts are not yours and yours are not His.

Today, consider with me that the Apostle John is focusing on three privileges. I've titled today's message “Three Privileges.”

A privilege is something designed for just one person while it's being made available to everybody else. So, look with me at these three privileges.

First, the privilege of being fully forgiven; verse twelve.

I John 2:12 *“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven [your sins have left] you for his name's sake.”*

He calls us, the fully forgiven, the “Little children.” It's the title given by a teacher to his or her students. In those days there were no public schools. Public schools weren't around until the third century A.D.

Instead, a Rabbi or a teacher would gather his disciples around him. John's students are his disciples; his protégés. He calls them “little children.” And he's calling us little children.

And Jesus did the same thing. When He was teaching the Twelve, He says this. Mark 10:24 *“And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto*

them, **Children**, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

John got this designation from Jesus. John 13:33 **"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you."**

Here's Jesus about to return to Heaven. So, He's concerned about the ones He's been teaching for three and one half years. And He sees them as a Teacher sees His disciples; as "little children." You see, little children are learners; the ones who look "to" their parents and they look "at" their parents to see how to live their lives.

The Apostle Paul does the same thing. Galatians 4:19 *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you ..."*

Now, what's the one thing that shows that you enjoy the privilege of being called children? One thing: their LORD's forgiveness. Look again at verse twelve.

I John 2:12 *"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven [your sins have left] you for his name's sake."*

My Ruthie teaches kindergarteners through third grade. And what does she teach? She teaches coding. And, in order to do that, she's got to teach the basics of computer. Now, the school she teaches in puts a very high stress on the importance of respect. So, when she's speaking, the students are respectfully listening. Most of them are focused on her. And I've been in the classroom with her. I watch her interest in them. I watch her concern for them. I watched as she listens to their questions. Why? They are her "children," her "students." It's a great sight.

John, the Apostle, also has group of students he's writing to. And one group he writing to has the privilege of being called "little children."

So, the first privilege, as John sees us is this. We are the LORD's little children; His disciples; His learners. John is writing to his students and he calls them little children.

It's a privilege that we lose too early in our modern world. Kids are expected to be quote "mature beyond their years" today. "My daughter is really smart for four." "My son knows the names of every single dinosaur that ever existed." Really?

And then there's the children John is writing to. Don't forget that John uses the term "children" twelve times in this little epistle. And why does John call them children? One main reason. These "little children" are focused on one special thing – they've been forgiven.

Folks, it's privilege to be in the group John calls the forgiven ones. You see, when God forgives, He forgives based upon the blood of His Son. And He forgives everything. He forgives so that each one who's been forgiven will walk closer and closer to Him; close like a little child with his mother.

By the way, it's not difficult to be forgiven. But, I know some of you have made it very hard for yourself to be forgiven. And when you make it difficult, you've missed the truth of forgiveness. God gave us His Son so that we could be forgiven. When you trust in Christ, you're forgiven. So, if you're forgiven today, you're privileged.

Do you remember the story about the woman who washed Jesus feet in the house of Simon, the Pharisee Luke 7:36 *"And one of the Pharisees desired [asked] him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. (37) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,*

(38) *And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

(39) *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.*

(40) *And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. (41) There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. (42) And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?*

(43) *Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. (44) And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.*

(45) *Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. (46) My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. (47) Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. (48) And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."*

Can you see what a huge privilege it is to be forgiven by God? If you're focused on the forgiveness you have because you're trusting in Jesus Christ, then, you're a child.

But John goes on to the young men.

The first privilege is the privilege to be fully forgiven.

The second privilege is the privilege of growing strong in the LORD; verse thirteen. 1 John 2:13 "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one."

Some of John's protégés have another focus. They're focused on growing. And, the growing ones are facing opposition. And the opposer? The wicked one.

And the way you know that you, as one of the LORD's disciples, are in *this* group is this. You've not only faced the opposer. You've overcome him. You see, the privilege of being called a young man by the Apostle John revolves around one thing: battle. And, every Christian who's winning the battle against the opposer is strong.

Folks, growing up in Christ includes this specific privilege. You meet opposition and you overcome it. Strong, young men and strong, young women are those who do battle. The wicked one faces off against you and *you* win. You're counted young man. You're counted a young woman.

Since the beginning of time the devil has been opposing both the LORD and those connected to Him. The devil is the deceiver. He's a liar. He's like a lion who is out to discourage, to defeat, and to destroy you.

And the child of God whose focus is on personal growth in his Christian life will, not only be opposed by the devil; he'll overcome him. Isn't that what John says?

1 John 2:13 "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one."

Now, wouldn't you like to know just how the young men and young women in Christ defeat the devil? By one and only one means. He or she knows the Word, memorizes the Word, and stands against the devil with the Word. And with the Word inside you, you have the strength to overcome him.

Here's how another New Testament writer puts it. Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

(13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

(14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

(16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ...”

Ephesians six is a perfect description of the young men in I John 2:13. He puts on spiritual armor. He stands against the devil personally. He lifts up the shield of faith when the fiery darts of the wicked one come his way. He wields the sword of the Spirit. And he prays with all prayer and supplication and perseverance.

You see, that’s the focus of the young men. Look again at how John emphasizes it in the very next verse. I John 2:14 *“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”*

Your strength is the strength that comes from the Bible.

Isn’t it just like God to have it this way? The means God has given you to grow into a strong, young man or woman is the same for each of us – letting the Word of Christ abide in us. That’s God’s way; storing up the Word in the treasure chest of your heart. Then, when it’s needed, you bring it to your mind and you resist the wicked one. Think about it this way. The most effective recourse you have against Satan is your Bible. But, not if it’s laying on your table or your desk.

And, let me remind you, folks. Many Christians haven’t yet entered into the privilege of overcoming the wicked one.

They’re missing out on that privilege. They know they’re opposed by the devil; oftentimes. Yet, they only know defeat. And they only know loss. The experience of Ephesians six is left to those who take up the sword and use it. Overcoming the devil is not for everybody.

Folks, Satan is like a roaring lion, walking about the earth, seeking whom he may devour. Yes, he’s been defeated at the Cross. But, that defeat only becomes practical when the Christian becomes a young man or a young woman who, not only resists the devil, but overcomes him.

Who here has had to face overwhelming temptation this past week? And, did you overcome? Who here this week has experienced covetousness, fear, worry, guilt, conflict, condemnation, being accused and abused, being tempted to retaliate, situations where you were hard pressed to stand up for Christ and overcome? These are all the ways Satan opposes us.

Satan, folks, is the accuser of the brethren. Do you know what the word Satan means? It’s adversary. That means that his very existence is adversarial to you. And, a major part of his opposition to you is that he accuses you of all sorts of things. That’s one of his opposition tactics. He’s determined to accuse you.

Martin Luther clearly describes the young man in the sense of the Apostle John chapter two, verse thirteen. Here’s what he once wrote.

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,*

*For lo! His doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.*

You see, when you were saved, you moved out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Satan does not like that one bit. [Picture of Kingdom]. So, just by virtue of the fact of your salvation, he opposes you.

Yet, you're growing. And Christians grow, often through opposition, folks. You grow when you resist the temptation of the devil to discouragement and the sins of the flesh.

And what did Jesus do when the devil opposed Him? He overcame the wicked one with the exact same power you have; the Word of God.

Here's Jesus versus the devil. Matthew 4:1 *"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. (3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

(4) But he answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

(6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

(7) Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

(10) Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou

serve. (11) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

Three temptations; three times Jesus simply quoted the Word of God. Even Jesus had to use the sword of the Spirit to resist the devil. He knew the Word of God and He applied it in the hour of Satan's temptations. From His own lips Jesus said "man shall live by every word of God."

I've often spoken with Christians who are being opposed by the devil. And I've seen it time and again. It's way too often defeat. Because the Word of God has little of no place in their hearts.

But, what about those who put Scripture into their hearts? Satan opposes. But the young man or the young woman overcomes the opposer.

Think back over this past year. Weren't there times when you were overwhelmed by temptation? And were you defeated or did you overcome? You see, Satan doesn't sleep. He's like a persistent lion who's out for revenge. He hates the LORD Jesus and he hates all those who believe in Him. So, if you're privileged to be one of the LORD's young men or young women, that means you are an overcomer. You've resisted Satan and he's lost again.

Please learn this wonderful lesson today. Young men and young women are those in whom the Word of God lives. 1 John 2:14 *"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."*

First, the privilege of being fully forgiven.

Second, the privilege of growing strong in the LORD.

The third privilege is found in being counted as a father. I'd like to hold that off for another time.

The story is told "about a swan that was walking on the shore of a lake, and a wolf came up and ran after the swan, and would have torn him to pieces. But the swan said to

himself, "I am not strong on the land, but I am strong on the water." So he plunged into the water, and when the wolf followed him into the water, he with his strong bill just gripped the wolf by the ears, and pulled his head down under the water, and drowned him." [Found on <https://biblehub.com/> "The Secret Of Overcoming Satan" by A. T. Pierson].

Satan is out of his element when you respond with your Bible. He will flee from you.

James 4:7 *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

In closing, let me ask you this. Has the Word of God aptly describe you today? Does the shoe fit? Can you see yourself in the Book? Has the LORD spoken to your heart? Where's the focus in your life right now? Is it on the wonder of forgiveness? You can't ask for anything more wonderful. Or, is it on being strong because the Word of God lives in you and, though opposed, you are an overcomer?

Now, you might be here today and have never trusted Jesus as your personal LORD and Savior. My question is this. Why not? Jesus has paid for all your sins. And the moment you trust Him as ask Him to be your Savior, He forgives every one of your sins and you are born again. You become a child of God.

Here's the Sinner's Prayer

"LORD, I know that I am a sinner. I ask forgiveness for all my sins. I believe on Your Son today as the One Who paid for all my sins. I take Jesus Christ as both my Savior and the Forgiver of all my sins. I want Your Son to come into my life right now. Thank You for the free gift of Eternal Life; Amen"

On the other hand, you might be here and, for the first time, realize that, as a Christian, you can be both forgiven of all your sins and able to resist Satan with Scripture.

If so, here's the Christian's prayer.

"LORD, thank You for salvation in Christ. I commit to filling my heart with your word so that, when Satan tempts me, I have the ability to overcome him. And thank you being my Strength. I now surrender all that I am to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

Hymn # 415 "We Are Called To Be God's People"

Extras

Save Johann's story for the privilege of being a father.

It's been said that Johann Albrecht Bengel, a German from the eighteenth century had two things about him that everyone knew. First, that he was a giant intellectually as a thinker, a philosopher, and a student of the education systems of his day. Bengel's highest claim to fame was that he was a seminary teacher. In particular, he was a Greek Scholar. Today we have his "Bengel's Greek New Testament."

The second thing that people said about Bengel was that he was such a simple, childlike man, very modest, humble, and unpretentious; even Christ-like.

So, one evening when Professor Bengel was out lecturing a group of seminarians, one of the students decided he wanted to find out what made the professor such a great man. He went into the professor's apartment, hid behind a curtain, and waited for Bengel to come home.

When he did, the student watched. He was tired. But Professor Bengel sat down at his desk and began reading his Bible. He watched as the professor turned to various places in the Scriptures. Then he listened as he heard Professor Bengel, as he bowed his head and placed his hands over his face and both over his Bible and prayed a simple prayer. "LORD Jesus, we are on the same old good terms. Good night." [This story about Bengel was taken from St. Andrew's Cross and an article titled "God Answer's Prayer" by Rose Porter, pp. 42-43, 55].

And, of course, don't complicate the Bible. Jesus Christ was the Simplest Person Who ever lived while, at the same time, being the Most Profound Person You'll ever know. He's God.

And He's not looking for experts in the Law. He had too many of them in the Scribes and Pharisees. So, don't become an expert in the Law. Instead, become an expert in simplicity; like this.

"Jesus had no home. He used to live at home with His Father. But He left the old home. He came down here to live with us and He made His home here in a little village among the hills. It was in a strip of land at the edge of a sea in the middle of the earth.

But they did not like His preaching there. It did not suit their way of living. That sometimes happens even yet. And they would not change their living to fit His preaching; and He could not change His preaching to where they insisted on living. That was a mere matter of honesty with Him. So there was trouble from the start. And one day things came to a [head] break, and they forced Him to leave the little village nestled among the hills, and for two years, or three, Jesus had no home." [Except from St. Andrew's Cross, a book about prayer and the Christian life "Quiet Talks on Prayer" by S. D. Gordon].

These words are from an old booklet by S. D. Gordon titled "Quiet Talks on Prayer."

"Who is the Master? Listen with your hearts. He's the most loving hearted Man the world ever knew. He has the biggest heart, the softest heart, in the strong meaning of the word soft. He has the womanliest heart. ... Nobody loved like Jesus did. And no one loves like He does" says Pastor Gordon.

Rant from ww.reddit.com

"So this happened last week: I'm a PhD student and this year I joined an academic communication class (once a week for two months). Interesting things, nice teacher, everybody was happy. Until last class. Because of a sudden health emergency, the person who was supposed to watch teacher's

kid that day couldn't anymore so she had the choice between cancelling the class or bringing her 6 year old kid with her and she chose to bring him.

I was not super happy about it but it seemed like a reasonable option since she had brought an iPad and headphones for the kid to watch a movie and it seemed better than just cancelling the class.

The class started with a presentation from one of the students, and at some point we heard the kid giggling and laughing super loudly at his movie. The teacher told him to be quiet but with a big proud smile, and the student talking just said "aw don't worry he isn't bothering me" and everybody was smiling like "this is so cute". I was livid, he interrupted the presentation like three times after that and everybody behaved like this was a very normal and cute situation.

Later during the class the kid just stood up and took pictures of us with the iPad, big "click" noise and all, and once again everybody just laughed like "what a little troublemaker". The teacher told him to stop but she was just so proud of him for basically being annoying. [Found on www.reddit.com "Title "Teacher brought her disruptive kid to class and everybody was happy about it."]