

## Our Privilege

### Offeratory

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Well, good morning to you all. Good to be with you once again, and I trust that you got a reasonable night's sleep. I do not know how good it was. We are usually wound up a bit and that makes it a little bit difficult to get a normal kind of sleep, especially when you are sleeping on a rock-hard bed. Have there ever been beds that are harder than the ones that they have here? I do not know.

Every nation has its privileged class, and in some nations it is the royalty. In this nation, it seems to be the political figures and the wealthy, regardless of their character. And there is no doubt that with privilege comes power. To be privileged means to be favored or to have been granted a benefit or a special advantage. It means to have been given immunity or permission or status that has denied others.

Sometimes one can think of instances in which whole nations are privileged, but privilege is not limited to nations because it seems as though nearly every village and hamlet has those whose names carry power of privilege.

Now we generally think of privilege as being the possession of the wealthy or occupying a position of influence and/or control so that when those who have it speak, things happen. The privileged are often thought of as the movers and shakers and the trendsetters that others look to in an attempt to imitate or to please. Another privilege may not have been earned but merely inherited and it may reside in a family of longtime wealth and status whose names carry a great deal of influence. Sometimes the privileged are looked upon as stodgy people living only to protect their position and to get things accomplished that will further their interests. But in some cases privilege is not nearly as restricted as one might think.

Turn with me to Leviticus the 19th chapter, verse 14, where it says,

**Leviticus 19:14** You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

This is interesting, at least in part because of where it appears. It is right in the midst of the holiness laws. Now it addresses the privilege of the overwhelming majority on earth possess: the privilege of being able to see and hear. Now some, for whatever the cause, may have been denied those privileges, and of course it is a small number compared to the whole of humanity, but nonetheless they are there.

This principle is stated negatively. But the positive side is that the haves—the privileged—are to be a source of assistance to the have-nots. Now the social welfare system has its roots at least partly in this concept that is stated here. The privileged have the obligation to care for those who are less endowed. And so the welfare system has been greatly abused, and I think we will all agree with that. And it needs to be reformed because it has failed to be merely a stopgap measure for a short time assistance, and it has in fact spawned a class of professional cheats who play the system, stealing so that they do not have to legitimately earn a living.

Now human nature motivates a mindset that convinces some that they are owed the assistance. But the intention that motivated the system, that is, the welfare system, is honorable and it has biblical roots. The Bible clearly shows this in other places that the privileged bear a responsibility to help those who are less privileged. Let us turn to another scripture I think that is very familiar to us in the book of Deuteronomy in chapter 14.

**Deuteronomy 14:28-29** "At the end of three years, you shall bring forth all the tithe of your increase of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite [Here comes the listing of those who are less privileged.], because he has no part nor inheritance [There is where he is disadvantaged in this regard.] with you, and the stranger [who is generally prejudiced against and looked down upon, feared, we bear suspicion to these people] and the fatherless [without a father, without a mother, sometimes those who are orphaned] and the widow [without a husband to lead her] who are

within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."

So God's laws concerning the less privileged in that we are required, obligated, to care for widows, for orphans, the poor, and the foreigner, are clearly seen. Now, besides this, in other places He says things like, "Don't cut the corners of your field. Don't glean your harvest. Open your hand wide to those in need." And there are others of similar attitude. So the principle that privilege brings with it responsibility is very clear.

For example, are you aware that the entire tithing and offering system has its base in the fundamental facts that bear on this? At the very bottom line of the tithing and offering system is God's claim on tithes and offerings in that He owns the earth and all that is in it. Not only that, Hosea specifically says that even the food that comes out of the ground is His, and He responsibly follows His laws and gives it to us who are less advantaged than He is so that we can use it. And as a result of our having the privilege of living here on His land and eating His produce, we are responsible to pay Him ten percent. And then because He has privileged us with so much more besides, including knowledge of Him, His purpose, and redemption, we are required to give Him offerings as well. And so the principle that privilege brings responsibilities is very clearly shown in God's Word.

Now let us go back into the New Testament in the book of Luke, chapter 12 and verses 47 and 48.

**Luke 12:47-48** [where Jesus said] "And that servant who knew his master's will [there is a privilege], and did not prepare himself [he did not take advantage of it] nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know [that is, was less privileged, less advantaged], yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, they will ask the more."

The more we are given, the more we are privileged, the greater the obligation. That is the principle there. This statement is the conclusion of a

rather long instruction given during Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, and that this is a warning is clearly directly aimed at us.

Again this has negative implications. Warnings of this sort are necessary because human nature is such that so frequently we need a threat, stated or implied, in order for us to make some effort to keep on the straight and the narrow. The privilege does not have to be looked upon negatively at all. For example: God's blessings to a person who is growing is to give them the privilege of greater responsibility or to increase their gifts. So you are coasting along at this rate. He gives you a blessing and you are up here now, and with it the responsibility increases as well.

So being blessed is to be privileged to serve and glorify God in a greater capacity and sometimes this links up with it becoming a curse. And we think of our blessings as being a curse because they bring the responsibility with them. But it reaches into some unlikely areas. I just want to show you one here in I Corinthians 12. This is the chapter regarding the body analogy that the apostle Paul makes.

**I Corinthians 12:21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again to the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Paul is saying here that institutions like the church or like a family, like a business, like an organization of any kind, is to be looked upon in a body sense; that one does not stand alone within it. And he is going to show here then that those who are a part of that body have a responsibility to meet because they have been privileged to be part of it.

**I Corinthians 12:22-26** No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow more greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. [Those who are more privileged have no need.] But God has composed the body, having given more greater honor to that part which lacks it [How about those apples? And the reason is], that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same

care one for another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

So this applies not only to the church but also, let us say, to businesses as well. It is the responsibility of leadership to take care of employees and not to think of them as necessary evils or as so much baggage that they have to be carrying. And sometimes this breaks down within families, within marriages, within businesses, within institutions.

Now do you consider your calling to be a blessing? Without having God give us the privilege of having this blessing we would not even be able to glorify God at all. And of course the calling brings with it responsibilities that we were not even aware of before, but it is in carrying out and fulfilling them that God is glorified.

Being privileged is to be blessed, to be in a position to do good, and for this we should be very thankful that we have been given so much. Do we often thank God that we can even see physically or hear physically? Do we thank God that we can see spiritually and that we can hear His Word with understanding? That is a privilege, but it bears with it a responsibility as well.

And thus in Deuteronomy 16:17 it says that we are to give as we are able according to the blessing, which is our privilege, the Lord has given you. So being in a position to give an offering is a privilege both in terms of money and having the knowledge to do so.

Now this scripture I want to turn to. Do you know what Israel's greatest privilege was? I want you to turn to the book of Amos. I mentioned this last night. I did not go into it very much, but we did touch on it in Deuteronomy the 4th chapter.

**Amos 3:1-2** Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you [Here is God's witness against Israel], O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

"You only." What a privilege that was! No other nation on earth in all of the history of mankind the past 6,000 years did God make a covenant with. No other nation ever heard God's voice speaking to them out of the mountains. No other nation of people ever had to stand at the base of that mount and feel the earth leaping around under their feet just merely from the presence of the power of God. And you see, in principle, we stand in the same place. No other people have been blessed to be able to "see" God, to be able to hear His Word with understanding.

Their greatest privilege, brethren, was that God chose to love them greater than He loves all other people. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. That hate incidentally is not an emotional quality. It is simply the matter of the choice that God made to reveal Himself to Jacob and to his children.

Now the same statement is true of us, except that the privilege extended by God through the New Covenant is far greater because God made the terms of the New Covenant so much superior as to make the Old Covenant obsolete.

It is our awareness of having been privileged to be blessed that lies at the foundation of thankfulness. And it is a privilege that ought to so put us into wonder and awe over its implications that our thankfulness ought to be brimful and running over and overflowing to such an extent that it is never forgotten. The greatest fall, the greatest destruction ever to come on any nation in the history of man, is going to come on Israel shortly because, like God says right here, because I have loved you, I will punish you, because of Israel's failure to carry through with their privilege.

So we have the choice of choosing between looking upon our privilege as a negative duty to be grudgingly borne or thankfully pursued because it is perceived to be a blessing to be in a position to have its responsibility; and God makes clear that He loves a cheerful giver. Now the amount is not what impresses Him, though that does have some bearing on His judgment. What pleases Him is our thoughtful and grateful consideration of His blessings and the cheerful, thankful meeting of the responsibilities that they impose.