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Newsletter

Privilege

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By Pastor Calvin Dorsey, Sandusky Life Church

Talking about a topic such as this can be difficult to navigate because of the current climate of our country. Terms such as “white privilege,” “black plight,” “white fragility,” “racism,” “justice

warrior,” “liberal,” and “social justice” have become misunderstood and, in some cases, weaponized to create further lanes of division within our country especially within the church. I truly believe it would do the church a great deal of good to divorce itself from many of these secular classifications. Along with these classifications often comes a worldview or system of teaching that is not rooted in Scripture.

Don't misconstrue my words, though; I believe that some of the teachings behind most of these terminologies have a great deal of merit. Some of the verbiage used are also more than adequate summations of the concepts they represent. The prevailing problem though is that when these concepts are not rooted in Scripture, they become problematic to the Christian worldview. Proverbs 2:6 says, **“All wisdom comes from the Lord, and so do common sense and understanding.”** Though all wisdom comes from God, when you intertwine the depravity of man, Satan perverts the truth to fit his divisive schemes. It's time for the church to not only reclaim certain language, but also to redeem certain ideologies back to a biblical worldview. Let's use the concept of “white privilege” as an example.

Privilege itself is simply defined as “a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.” Often when people hear the term “white privilege” or “privilege,” there is an immediate sting that occurs. I understand the tension, because any time anyone slaps a descriptor to your people group you can feel pre-judged. In his book *Insider Outsider*, Dr Bryan Loritts states, **“I often bristle at the phrase white privilege. It's so harsh and unfair. Just about all of us have a portion of privilege heaped on our plates.”** I think it is also important to point out that Dr. Lorritts goes on to say that while his ethnicity does place him at a disadvantage in many areas, he as a black man has been a partaker in many privileges in his life.

If we get past the initial sting, we have to ask the question, is privilege a biblical concept? The answer is a resounding “yes and amen.” With that being said, let's look at the concept of “privilege” through the lens of Scripture.

Romans 5:2 “Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.”

1 Peter 4:16, “But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!”

We, as believers in Christ, partake of a whole host of privileges that are solely bestowed upon his church. We have unfettered access to the throne of God (Heb 4:16). We are endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We also have access to the peace of God that transcends all understanding (Phil 4:7). These are just a few, but as citizens of heaven, we have access to

many advantages in this world. The interesting part is that many of these kingdom privileges are not given based on our personal work, but they are bestowed by the unmerited favor given by a gracious God. Often these privileges are not just for our own sake, but for the benefit of others.

We are given gifts for the growth of other believers (Eph 4). We have access to the throne of God not only for our requests, but for the benefit of others- even the unbelieving world. Much of what God has given us is not to be hoarded for our sake, but to be given freely for the benefit of the church and society as a whole.

The issue at hand when it comes to privilege is not that having advantages over someone else is bad or somehow ungodly. The issue is how we steward those privileges once we are aware of them.

Regardless of your work ethic, economic hardships, or education, advantages have been bestowed upon the dominant culture in America, namely white individuals. Some privileges have been allotted to white Americans simply because they are the majority. Privileges exist because Europe was paramount in conquering nations before our modern civilization. Privileges also exist over blacks because of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the 3/5 compromise, segregation, redlining and many other racist policies/practices. These systemic issues throughout history have placed blacks in America at an economical, societal, and educational disadvantage in comparison to his or her white counterparts. As a white American, you yourself may have not played a direct part in that disadvantage, but you are a recipient of its privilege. So, if you deem it “white privilege” or “majority advantage,” that is of no concern to me, as long as we can acknowledge those advantages exist. So, the question that now confronts us is “how will you steward that privilege?”

There is an account in Acts 27 where Paul is on his way as a prisoner to Rome to face charges. Along the ill-advised boat journey, Paul and the 276 members of the vessel are shipwrecked. During the midst of a violent hurricane, the men who are famished, distraught, and defeated are certainly sure of their demise until this happens:

Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.”

What we witness in this instance is that because of Paul's privilege of simply knowing the King of Kings, the people on the boat are spared. His relationship with the Creator affected the physical well-being of those he was surrounded with. As people with privilege, whether it be from the color of our skin, our relationship with the Creator, or our position in society or the church, we must continue to ask the question: "how can I leverage my privilege for the benefit of other believers and the unbelieving world around me?"

Philippians 2:3,4 says, **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."**

A few practical ways of leveraging our privilege are through elevation, support and sacrifice. Help to elevate minority voices around us to show the beauty and power of diversity. Support minority ministries, creators, and business to foster an environment of unity amongst the church. Lastly, sacrifice means, at the guiding of the Holy Spirit, we are to give up positions of authority and status for the sake of including qualified minorities who may have been overlooked simply because of their lack of privilege.

As we grow together as a Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family, my prayer is that we learn together how to leverage whatever privilege we have for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Loritts, Bryan C.. Insider Outsider (p. 57). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

 Taylor Callahan /

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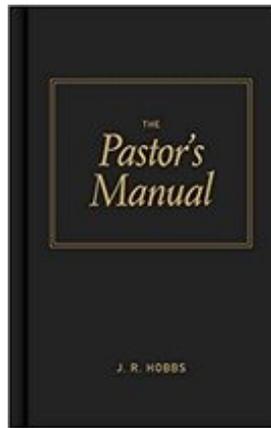
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