

Ephesians 1:5

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Today, we are going to look at Privilege, Provision and Possibilities.

privilege

Privilege is an interesting word and is taking on new weight in recent years. It can sometimes make us bristle, like it's an accusation or criticism, to suggest that those of us that live in Northern Virginia lead a privileged lifestyle. It doesn't mean that people don't work hard to earn their living or had every benefit they enjoy just handed to them. However, I cannot deny that there are some issues that I as a white woman have not had to deal with that my friends who are African American, Latino, Asian, etc. have dealt with. I want to encourage us as a family to be empathetic to each other, and be willing to see things from each others' vantage point.

I like this explanation and definition from vocabulary.com:

- *Privilege* comes from Latin *privilegium*, meaning a law for just one person, and means a benefit enjoyed by an individual or group beyond what's available to others. Someone wealthy come from privilege. Someone with a library card has borrowing privileges.

God in his sovereignty has chosen to adopt us into his family, and given us the privileges that accompany that.

SCRIPTURE:

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ga 3:26–29). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Galatians 4

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶ And because

we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”

⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ga 4:4–7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Romans 8

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ro 8:14–17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Philippians 1

²⁹ For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

³⁰ We are in this struggle together.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Php 1:29–30). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

THE WORD OF THE LORD.
THANKS BE TO GOD.

So what are some of the privileges we see in these scriptures?

I see freedom. I see equality. I see adoption and belonging. I see the Holy Spirit indwelling. I see glory.

We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ - that is mind-boggling. Jesus has shared his mission and his authority with us. He told the disciples that they, and by extension we, would do greater things than even he had done.

And I see suffering and struggle. All the good things that Jesus offers are not being fully realized when we look around us. We are heirs, but we haven’t fully received our inheritance.

There is pain. There is suffering. **And suffering for Christ is one of the privileges of being in the family of God.**

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTED

You are a child of God, invited to address him as Abba, Father. We read two of the three places in the New Testament where this phrase was written. The other place it was used was by Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane. As we think about the privilege of suffering,

remember Jesus.

SERMON CONTINUES

I would like to quote from a book that I highly recommend - 'The Insanity of God' written by Nik Ripken (a pseudonym name). Nik was a missionary in Africa, serving in Somalia during the famine of the 1990's. Following several setbacks, he and his wife returned to the states, seeking God for answers to how to minister in what we would call 'hostile' environments - places where the Gospel is not welcome and Christians are persecuted for their faith. He set out on a quest to interview those who had maintained their faith in Communist regimes, with the hope that learning what worked for them would also work in Islamic countries. He met hundreds of people, conducting interviews with those who had been imprisoned, tortured, lost family members, and faced all sorts of persecution. Here is a summary paragraph toward the end of the book:

"What we discovered—through God's grace and with the help of hundreds of faithful people—wasn't so much a strategy, a method, or a plan. Rather, it was a Person. We found Jesus—and we found that Jesus is very much alive and well in the twenty-first century. Jesus is revealed in the lives and words and resurrection faith of believers in persecution.

"These believers don't just live for Jesus, they live with Jesus every day.

"These believers have also taught me a whole new perspective on persecution. For decades now, many concerned western believers have sought to rescue their spiritual brothers and sisters around the world who suffer because they choose to follow Jesus. Yet our pilgrimage among house churches in persecution convinced us that God may actually want to use them to save us from the often debilitating, and sometimes spiritually-fatal, effects of our watered-down, powerless western faith."

A few pages down: "Ruth and I have seldom encountered a mature believer living in persecution who asked us to pray that their persecution would cease. We have never heard that request. Rather, believers in persecution ask us to pray that "they would be faithful and obedient *through* their persecution and suffering."

Paul says to the church in Philippi that a privilege of family is **being in the struggle together**. I want us to know that we belong to the family of God that reaches around the world, into house churches that meet in secret. We can be in the struggle through prayer, asking God to strengthen them, that they will be faithful and obedient. And I want us to know that we belong to each other here at Vienna Assembly of God, and that we can share in the struggle together.

"Suffering for Jesus" doesn't sound like a great PR campaign. But guess what - God's ways are not the world's ways. Jesus let us know, straight up, no minced words. In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. He said his followers will

face persecution and trials, but that he will never leave us nor forsake us. Paul says that if we partake of his glory, we must also partake of his suffering. And somehow - God uses this to expand his kingdom and bring people to himself.

Can we be a family that embraces ALL the privileges of family, including being real about the struggle, and willing to think differently about suffering?

In terms of being in the struggle together, I also want to encourage us to think about some of the privileges in the scriptures we read. In our own community/state/nation, there are those who are not free. They are not treated with equality. Injustices are supported in systemic ways. Racism is real. Being in the struggle with our brothers and sisters might involve pain. It will be painful and difficult. But it is a part of being family.

provision

RE-READ: Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

What was God's promise to Abraham?

From Genesis 12: ² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

We are a part of God's family on earth. We will be a blessing to others. And all families on earth will be blessed through us.

God is our provider. We can trust in him to supply all our needs. We are children of faith. Is that provision enough? We can not just live *for* Jesus, but live **with** Jesus!

possibilities

You are a joint-heir with Christ, risen with him, living in the already but not yet.
You are a joint-heir with Christ, invited to the fellowship of his suffering.
We are one in Christ, no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. We are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to us.

So what's possible?

God's strength can be made perfect in your weakness.
God's glory can be revealed like a treasure through my 'clay jar'
All your needs can be met according to His riches in Christ Jesus
You are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus
You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you
You can live in freedom - spiritual freedom that is more powerful than earthly bondage
You can live by the Spirit of God
You can be resurrected to new life in Christ, by the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead
You can confidently reach outside your comfort zone - to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, heal the sick, be kind to the poor and downtrodden
You can be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and filled with His power
You can be healed by the stripes of Jesus
You can be more than a conqueror through Christ who loves you
We can bear one another's burdens
We can be the salt of the earth
We can be a city on a hill that cannot be hidden, shining the light of Jesus for the world to see
We can be a family that loves each other, cares for each other, welcomes our friends and strangers
We can struggle together, and see victory together

Let's pray