

Reigning in life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev John Adamson

[0 : 00] Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes. So exclaimed the first Queen Elizabeth of England when she learned that she had been made Queen of the realm.

And when the believer is first confronted with Paul's triumphant declaration, there must surely come a similar response. It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.

What Paul would have us grasp is the great truth of the believer's privilege of reigning in life. What Paul tells us is this.

We can now live the royal life. The life of authority, the life of victory, the life of liberty, the life of bounty. Through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 11] And this privilege is worthy of our closest study and our deepest place. So I ask you to think with me this morning concerning the believer's privilege of reigning in life.

Let us ask first, on what basis is our privilege of reigning in life to be explained? In our text, Paul states clearly and categorically, They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life.

Now he identifies those who are to reign in life as those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

Now what does that mean? Well several writers suggest that what we have here is a reference to that in continual supply of God's grace available to believers and appropriated by believers.

They feel that Paul is speaking of the day by day reception of God's grace.

[2 : 38] That interpretation, however, is open to question. It seems to me that what Paul is speaking about here is that initial reception by the sinner of the abundant grace of God and his gift of righteousness.

That is, what Paul is referring to as the basis of our privilege of reigning is not the continual but the initial reception of the grace of God.

I may put the truth in another way. Believer, your conversion day was your coronation day.

When you initially received God's grace and the gift of righteousness, you were raised from the rank of a slave to that of a sovereign.

You exchanged your chain for a crown, your prison for a palace, your shackles for a scepter. Although once enslaved, you have been emancipated and enthroned.

[3 : 50] And it is your reception of God's plenteous grace and provided righteousness that is the basis of your privilege of reigning in life.

There are some senses in which, in order for us to understand all that is involved in our reception of God's grace and gift, we must need to study all the epistle up to the statement of our text.

For one of the remarkable aspects of this wonderful letter is the closely knit structure of the Apostle's argument.

He is analyzing the gospel of Christ. What it is, what it does and what it means.

Now we do not have time, however, for such an exhaustive study. Rather than tackling such an investigation, let us confine ourselves in this fifth chapter.

[5 : 03] And see how indeed our reception of God's grace and gift has made the basis of the warmth of our reigning in life.

Our reception of God's grace and gift means first of all that whereas once we were ungodly, we have now been justified by faith.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. First one. And of who is the Apostle speaking? Surely he is speaking of those who were once ungodly.

For it was his whole point in chapter 4 to prove that God justifies only those who are prepared to confess to their ungodliness.

And are therefore prepared to accept abundant grace and the free gift of God's righteousness. And if it ever be questioned why it is that they who were once ungodly have now been granted throne rights, then we must appeal to the fact that they have received personally the grace of God and his gift of righteousness.

[6 : 33] This is the basis of our privilege of reigning. But the basis of our reigning in life makes me explained in other terms.

In verse 10 of this chapter 5, Paul states, When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

Now that simply means that although once we were hostile to our God, through our reception of abundant grace and the gift of divine righteousness, we have been brought into harmony with heaven.

Paul refers indirectly to yet another aspect and consequence of our having received abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, when he states in the first part of our text, death reigned by one.

Now in our unsaved condition, we were the slaves of death and of sin. We were ruled over by the king of terrorists.

[7 : 57] We were held in the grip of that dread tyrant. But when we received abundance of grace and the gift of God's righteousness, we were set free.

Indeed, things were absolutely reversed. Once we were slaves of death, now we reign over death.

We have been emancipated and enthroned. On what basis therefore may our privilege of reigning in life be explained?

We reign in life because we have received abundance of God's grace and his gift of righteousness. And that is why God can now righteously confer upon us the privilege of reigning in life.

Many years ago, a prince visited the country of France. While he was there, he was taken to the arsenal of Toulon, where were kept at that time a large number of prisoners.

[9 : 10] And as a compliment to the prince, the commandant said that he was welcome to set free any one galley slave whom he should choose to select.

And willing to make the best use of such privilege, the prince spoke to many of the prisoners in succession, inquiring from them why they had been condemned.

And one by one the slaves defended themselves, attributing the cause of their imprisonment to oppression, injustice, false accusation, etc.

It seemed that they were all injured and mistreated persons. And finally the prince approached one prisoner who, when asked the same question as the others, he answered, Your Highness, I have no reason to complain.

I have been a very wicked and desperate wretch. I have often deserved to be broken alive on the rack. I count it a great mercy that I am here.

[10 : 14] The prince fixed his eyes upon him, gave him a gentle blow on the head and said, Oh you wicked wretch, it is a pity that you should be placed among so many honest men.

By your own confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all. You shall not stay with them another day. Then turning to the commandant, the prince said, This is the man, sir, whom I wish to be released.

That prisoner, once guilty, once an enemy of the state, once enslaved, was set free, was acquitted, was reconciled on the basis of his confession of his need and his reception of abundant grace.

And my dear friends, it is as we take our place before God as guilty, hostile and enslaved, that we receive abundance of grace and the gift of divine righteousness.

This is the basis of our reigning in life. Our second question with regard to our reigning in life is, In what sphere is this privilege of reigning in life to be expressed?

[11 : 40] Paul states in our text, Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Now it is possible for us to take the phrase, Shall reign in life, As referring to the future reign of the believer over death.

For death shall yet be a defeated foe, And this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, And this mortal shall have put on immortality, Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Or again, The phrase may simply be describing the quality of the reign, As if the apostle were declaring that, Through the reception of God's grace and gift, Believers shall live to the fullest extent.

Now taken this way, The phrase would be equivalent to, Shall reign grandly and gloriously. The words, In life, However, May refer simply to the fact that our privilege of reigning is to be realized in this present life.

[13 : 08] The sphere in which we are to rule is this present earthly existence. We are to be kings and queens here and now.

As F.B. Myers states, It is possible that there is a life to be lived in the common round and the daily task, So royal, So radiant, So blessed, That those who live it may be said to reign in life.

What then does our reigning in life involve? Our reigning in life must surely involve reigning over sin and self.

Oh fellow believer, It is gloriously possible for you to reign over that besetting sin that has plagued and pursued you these many years.

You were born to rule. And therefore although that sin has bruised your heel, By claiming your right to reign, you can bruise its head.

[14 : 19] You can conquer and crush that sin which so controls you at the present time. And we can likewise reign over the world with all its allurements and its many attractions.

So many of God's people are victims of, rather than being victims over this present age. We have been ensnared and enslaved by its fashions, its fads, its fancies.

Like Demas, they love this present age. But God's Magna Carta to the believer includes in it the privilege of ruling over the world.

Its sovereign, not its slave. The believer's royal rank entitles him to reign over circumstances.

One writer, Horace Smith, once said, If a letter were to be addressed to that most influential word, circumstances, concluding thus, I am, sir, your very obedient and humble servant, the greater part of the world might subscribe to it without deviating from the strictest veracity.

[15 : 44] Put simply, too many of us are servants to our circumstances.

An old Negro woman asked of a sick minister, Master, do you see the bright side this morning? No, Nanny, replied the minister.

It's not so bright as I would wish it to be. Well, Master, I always see the bright side. You do? But maybe you haven't had much trouble.

Maybe not, she said. But then she went on to tell in her simple broken way of her life in Virginia, of the selling of her children one by one, of the auction sale of her husband, and then finally of herself.

She was alone now without having heard from one of her family for many years. But Nanny said to the minister, Have you seen the bright side all the time?

[16 : 49] Always, Master, always. Well, how do you do it, he asked. This way, Master, when I see a great black cloud coming, and it appears like it's coming to crush down on me, and I just, I just whoops round on the other side, and I find the Lord Jesus there.

And then it's all bright and clear. The bright side always is where Jesus is, Master. Now, here was a woman reigning in life.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. In the biography of Mrs. Charles Kalman, we are told that once, during a period of illness, someone said to that great-hearted warrior for God, you are regal, you are still queen.

And that ability to reign over our circumstances is offered to every one of God's children. Sin, self, the world, circumstances, things.

[18 : 28] It is over these that the believer is privileged to reign. Things. We look around us, we see saints chained to things.

Here is one contributing cause for the slow progress of the Gospel in the world. We are told that once, David Livingstone was misjudged by a fellow missionary.

And in order to avoid having any scandal before the unsaved natives, he gave up his house and his garden at Mabolza, with all the toil and money that they had cost him.

And then in a new place, he began to build a house and a school building. And his colleague was so struck with his generosity, that he confessed, had he known of Livingstone's decision to sell his first house and garden, he would never have spoken a word against him.

But Livingstone did not change his mind, stuck to his resolution. Parting with his garden, however, evidently cost him a pang, for he wrote in his diary, I like a garden, but paradise will make amends for all our privations and sorrows here.

[19 : 47] Livingstone was reigning in life over things. The believer is privileged to reign over sin and self and the world, circumstances and things.

But our third question, our third question relative to our privilege of reigning in life is, through what means is our privilege of reigning in life to be enjoyed?

Listen. Listen you to the answer. They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.

By one Jesus Christ. That is, we reign as kings, we enjoy this thrilling privilege, through our union with Christ Jesus.

This fact of the believers' union with Christ is not sufficiently emphasized by us. Indeed, I may state that any system of holiness may be tested, both with regard to its value and its validity, it may be tested by the place it gives to the doctrine of union with Christ.

[21 : 16] Any system that minimizes or overlooks this relationship must be instantly questioned. The test question always is, where in the system is this great and glorious truth of union with Christ placed?

Now our union with Christ needs to be properly regarded. If we would reign in life, we must prize this relationship above all.

When the Duke of Windsor abdicated the British throne, he said in a radio broadcast, I have determined to renounce the throne.

This is my final and irrevocable decision. He was a man who did not properly regard his relationship to royalty, and who did not esteem highly enough the privilege of reigning that this relationship brought to him.

And it is only as we pay due regard to our relationship to Christ, that we begin to prize and to enjoy our privilege of reigning in life.

[22 : 38] The fact of our vital union with Christ never changes, and the believer may count in this fact at every moment of each day. To himself the believer may say, I can reign in life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Weak and worthless in myself, I yet can take the throne and rule over my sin, over the world, over the things of the world, over the circumstances of life.

And moment by moment, as I recognize my union, I can live like a king. And this leads me to say that the fact of our union with Christ needs to be practically realized.

This is achieved first through abandonment. As George Matheson puts the truth in his hymn, My will is not my own till thou hast made it thine.

If it would reach a monarch's throne, it must its crown resign. My heart is weak and poor until it master find. It has no spring of action sure, it varies with the wind, it cannot freely move till thou hast wrought its chain.

[24 : 05] Enslave it with thy matchless love, and deathless it shall reign. And second, our union with Christ is realized practically by appropriation.

We must be so identified with the reigning Christ that his life is lived out in us. Finally, our union with Christ is realized practically by abiding.

It is by a constant being at home in Christ that our union with him is made a factor in daily living. And it is as our union with him is thus practically realized that we truly reign in life.

Now, we have considered the basis on which our privilege of reigning in life is to be explained, the sphere in which our privilege of reigning is to be expressed, and the means by which our privilege of reigning is to be enjoyed.

Now, to each believer comes the choice of ascending or abdicating the throne, of reigning as a king or remaining as a slave.

[25 : 30] There is a story told of how Napoleon once took his little three-year-old son with him on his famous horse Marengo, took him to a military review.

And as the child was so young, there was some anxiety as to whether he might cry when the trumpets sounded and the drums rolled.

But the little chap was very good indeed throughout the whole performance. And after all the pomp and ceremony, Napoleon asked the little lad what he would like as a reward for behaving so well.

What an opportunity! The man whose armies were everywhere triumphant was ready to do a child's bidding. And had the little king, as the child was called, Had the little king asked for a fortune, he might have received it.

Had he begged for something which kings alone can give, would not Napoleon have been able to supply it? But this small boy, who was a baby, had slept in a golden cradle, he made only a very modest request.

[26 : 46] Please, he whispered, please, may I go and paddle in the mud. Now we don't blame the little lad, but oh, how many of the sons of God, those who are born to reign, make a similar choice.

God holds out to us majesty, and we choose mud. He invites us to share in the royal resources of heaven, and we choose to play with the things of earth.

What is it going to be for you, my friend? Mud or majesty? The choice is yours to resign your throne rights, or to reign in life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let us pray. O gracious and ever blessed God, we give thee thanks for thy holy word, for the many invitations and promises contained therein.

We give thee thanks, gracious one, for this invitation to reign in life. May we ever remember, O Lord, that we are the sons of God, King of kings and Lord of lords.

[28 : 22] So, gracious one, may we by our walk and by our talk show that we are thine, that we are the sons of God.

And may we, gracious one, be enabled by the strengthening power of thy spirit to rule over ourselves, to rule over our surroundings.

And so, gracious one, ever to remember that we shall yet sit, thy dear son, on the throne of glory. Bless us, we pray thee, O Lord, as we leave this thy house, who see us to our homes in safety.

Come out with us in the evening. For we ask it in the Saviour's name. Amen. Amen.