

Teaching Sound Doctrine

Lord Teach Us Pt.5

Privileges / Obligations Christian Citizenship

Note: This lesson has been adapted from an article written back in 1957 by Bonds Stocks

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22.)

A citizen is "one owing allegiance to and entitled to protection from a government."

The Christian is a citizen of two governments. He is a citizen of the temporal government under which he lives. We are I are citizens of the United States and as such we owe allegiance to that government and are entitled to its protection and care. A citizen of the United States is entitled to and assured of the protection of his government regardless of where he is.

The Christian is also a citizen of divine government. *"Php 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"* The church is the kingdom of God on earth, and members of the church are citizens of the kingdom.

Now as citizens of the United States, it is our duty to be loyal to the constitution of the United States, to obey its laws, to respect its lawmakers and law enforcers. When we do that, we are entitled to all the privileges of citizenship. There are some conditions, however, under which we can lose the rights of citizenship. Those who are sentenced to penal institutions for certain crimes are deprived of the rights of citizenship.

As citizens of divine government we are subjects of the King of Kings - Jesus Christ. We must be loyal to the law of the kingdom as laid down in the New Testament. When one has complied with the requisites for citizenship as given

in the New Testament, We are a citizen of the kingdom, has all the rights that inhere in such citizenship, and assumes all the responsibilities of good citizenship.

It is the purpose of this lesson to examine some of the privileges and a few of the obligations of Christian citizenship. In preparation for such a study there are two fundamental truths that need to be appreciated. They are:

All-Powerful King

1. Christians are subjects of the King of Kings.- . . . for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:14.) Christ is the absolute monarch of divine government. (Revelation 19:16.) Jesus of Nazareth, whom God hath declared to, be both Lord and Christ, has never oppressed his subjects. He has no ax to grind, no selfish interest to serve. He has all power in heaven and on earth, and all this power he exercises, not for self-aggrandizement, but for the protection and welfare of his loyal followers.

Perfect and Permanent Law

2. Christians are ruled by a perfect and permanent law. The New Testament is the perfect law of liberty. (James 1:25.) It is designed for the welfare of God's people.

On the front of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., these words are enshrined: "Equal justice Under Law." We know, however, that human law is imperfect, and that there are many flaws in the laws that are on our statute books. We know, too, that even when our laws are right, those who administer them are subject to the fallibilities of the flesh, and for that reason there are many miscarriages of justice. It is constantly necessary to revise and amend human laws.

This is not true in the realm of divine government. The laws that are given in the New Testament are perfectly adapted to the needs of God's people. It is not necessary for us to concern ourselves about trying to improve them because they are perfect, When they were enacted by heaven, they were not experiments but, because they were born of divine wisdom, they were, from the beginning, characterized by finality. Not only do these laws need no improvement, but those who tamper with them in any way bring themselves under the anathema of heaven. *(Galatians 1:6-12 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we*

said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.; Also see Revelation 22:18, 19.) So the Christian has the privilege of living under a law the only object of which is his prosperity, his happiness and his eternal welfare. Another fine thing about God's law is that it is permanent. (*Hebrews 13:20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,*) Citizens of our government do not know how to make their plans for next year because they do not know what the law will be. But God has given us his law for all time. We know that it will be the same next year as it is today. Jesus vouched for the permanence of his law: "*Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away.*" (*Matthew 24:35.*)

Most Highly Favored Kingdom

1. Christians are members of the most highly favored kingdom on earth. "*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who, sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" (*Ephesians 2:12, 13.*)

Christians are those who, although they were once aliens from God's kingdom and strangers to God's covenant, have had all their sins taken away in the blood of Christ. Think of the privileges of the Christian as outlined in the second chapter of Ephesians. Others may live in palatial mansions surrounded by luxury, but Christians live in a tabernacle cleansed by the blood of Christ! Others may walk with the great and near great, but Christians walk with God! Others may be friends of the famous, but Christians are related to every other member of the blood-washed throng! Others may have influence in the citadels of temporal power, but the Christian has power with God! Others may build their lives on the foundation of material security, but Christians live by faith in the only eternally successful leader Jesus Christ! Others may be proud of the blue blood in their family lineage, but Christians are members of the household of God!

Purest Kingdom

2. Christians are members of the purest kingdom on earth. "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should*

show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (I Peter 1 :9.) Children of God - citizens of the kingdom - have the best environment on earth. Their most intimate companions are the best people on earth. The atmosphere of Christianity is wholesome and invigorating. It is true that the kingdom, while it remains on the earth, is not composed of people who are sinlessly perfect. It is rather composed of people who have had their past sins washed away in the blood of the lamb of God and who are growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. In the Christian commonwealth evil is the exception rather than the rule, and it is never condoned by faithful Christians.

Most Enlightened Kingdom

3. Christians are members of the most enlightened kingdom on earth. *"Giving thanks unto the Father which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son." (Colossians 1 :12, 13.)* The kingdom of God is the realm of light. Jesus declared, *"I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8:12.) There are many Christians who do not know much about say, Einstein's theory of relativity, who do not comprehend all the mysteries of atomic energy, and who have little familiarity with the ways of the world. It is nevertheless true that the genuine Christian is the most enlightened man on earth. He follows in the footsteps of him who is the light of the world and his daily food is the word of truth.

Next week we will continue this lesson starting with Most Profitable Kingdom.