

Our Dual Citizenship

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Greetings to everyone here and elsewhere. I never know how to cover all of that and I never know how I'm going to be introduced either. It depends on who does it, I guess.

I'm a small town kid, and most people know I'm a hick. When we grew up, most of us didn't have the finances or the ambition to go to college right out of high school, so we joined the military. That was an easy and quick out. Small town kids' ambition is to get out of that small town and get out and see the world. Well, I did that and five years later when I came home, I didn't want to leave again. That just goes to show you that we have different ideas about things, especially when we travel and leave the country.

We've been able to travel to other countries a number of times to Feast sites, but one thing is common both in my military experience and since. Whenever we leave it's always good to come home. It's always good to get back to the U.S. We have that cliché, "No place like home." Well that's really true if you've been to some other places in the world. We have this thing we call the American dream. The politicians have played on that. They've come up with the so called Dream Act. That's to entice immigrants to the country. There may or may not be a hidden agenda there. I'm not knocking the desire of people to improve their standard of living, because we've been to many places in the world where it's obvious that we have a very high standard of living in comparison to some other countries, and we have a lot more freedoms.

I remember one time we went to the Feast in the Caribbean. We went to Tobago. We were talking to a taxi driver, and when you go to those places often your taxi drivers become your inexpensive tour guides. He was saying that he wanted to send his kids to college. They don't have anything like student loans. He couldn't do that. We can do that in this country. There's no doubt that people want to come to the U.S.

I have a quote I'd like to read from a website called usimmigration.com. It's not a federally funded or sponsored website. Here's what they say. "U.S. citizenship application N400 is the one that you use to obtain citizenship, to become a naturalized citizen if you're from another country. A lawful permanent resident, green card holders over the age of 18 are eligible to fill out that form and apply for citizenship in the U.S."

Some of those requirements are that you have to be a green card holder for at least five years. Another one is if you're married to a U.S. citizen and have been a green card holder for three years, then you can apply for citizenship. Also if you've served in the military, you're eligible to apply for citizenship. Then the website goes on, "Becoming a U.S. citizen has many advantages." Then it lists some of the advantages.

- You have the right vote.
- You have the right to help elect the leaders of the nation.

- You have a voice in federal, state, local and city elections.
- You have the opportunity and the advantage to reunite your family. If your family is in another country, you're entitled to bring them to the U.S. and apply for citizenship.
- If you have children that are born in another country and you are a U.S. citizen, you can bring them to this country.
- You also have the right as a citizen to obtain a U.S. Passport, which means you can legally travel to other countries on a U.S. Passport as a U.S. citizen.
- Most of all one of the main advantages of U.S. citizenship is that you can apply for benefits: Social Security, Medicare and all of that.
- You can become an elected official.
- You can become a federal employee, which you cannot unless you are a U.S. citizen.

Again it's not my purpose to get into the politics of all that. This is an introduction of what I'm going to talk about.

What about us and our citizenship? The fact is, according to scripture, we have a dual citizenship.

We are citizens of the U.S. or whatever country we happen to be in. I know we may have listeners in other countries, Australia for one. We've been there. It's a great country and a big country.

Paul says that we have a citizenship also in heaven.

Let's turn to Philippians 3:20 and see where he says that.

Philippians 3:20. *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (NKJV)*

So it's kind of saying here that we're caught between two sets of loyalties as we function as citizens. Yet we realize that there's a spiritual element that we need to emphasize. That's the purpose and the title to my message today,

Our Dual Citizenship

What I'm going to try to bring out as I go along, mainly through God's word, is that we need to have a clear understanding of what that means.

First let's take a look at that word. The Greek word is "politeuma". That is not where our word "politics" comes from. It's the only place in the New Testament that this word is used, Philippians 3:20. From the King James, Philippians 3:20 says,

Philippians 3:20. *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: (KJV)*

When we see that word “conversation”, and that’s the way it was translated, the word “conversation” is kind of an archaic term. Years and years ago when it was translated into the King James English, it meant something else. When we think of conversation, we think of a dialogue with other people or maybe with ourselves. Someone asked me as I drove up this morning if I had any company. I said, “No, I just talk to myself.” But if you look at that from the King James, that word “conversation”, it’s kind of an awkward translation. Again, it means different things to us at this time than it did then. But most of the time if you’re using a King James all the time, when you see that word “conversation”, just insert the word “conduct” because that’s what it really means in the Greek. It makes more sense if you do that when you use the King James. If you use the New King James, it will do that for you. It will say conduct rather than conversation.

Just to compare those two from the King James, Philippians 1:27 says, “*Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.*”

From the New King James it says, “*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.*” It says the same thing, but it makes a lot more sense. In the New American Standard it translates that word “conversation” and “conduct” as “behavior”.

It never fails to amaze me the way the sermonette and the sermon match, because Les talked about behavior in his sermonette which is interesting. He talked about the way children learn from their parents. Marie isn’t here today, but the first thing the kids learned from Grandma Marie was “No” and they knew that she meant it. They understand that perfectly to this day when they hear “No.”

The New International translates that same word where it says conduct or conversation, it says, “*Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*” Others are similar to that. Not to beat this word to death, but to make more sense out of it, because I’m going to get into the concept of what we’re talking about here.

In The Word Study Dictionary that word “citizenship” from Philippians 3:20, the noun term means *to behave as a citizen*. It just refers to the condition of the life of a citizen. The synonyms for that also talk about the condition and the rights of a citizen. It’s just a way of life, a behavior.

The whole point here is the Greek for that particular term just means *to act as a citizen, how you live your life, how you conduct your affairs, your behaviors, etc.* That’s a little bit about what Les was talking about in the sermonette. You can see that if you study it. If you kind of pull on that string through scripture, you’ll see that it ties together in other places too, and we’ll see that as we go along.

I’d like to go back and read Philippians 3:20 and 21 to get this whole concept. We will read from the New King James which makes that word a little clearer.

Philippians 3:20. *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21) who will transform our lowly body (our physical body) that it may be conformed to His glorious body (spiritual body), according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (NKJV)*

1 Corinthians 15 reinforces this idea of Christ subduing all things to Himself, God the Father and Jesus Christ subduing all things. This is just a reference scripture.

1 Corinthians 15:28. *Now when all things are made subject to Him (the Father), then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him (the Father) who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (NKJV)*

As citizens we are waiting for that, for Jesus Christ to return and subdue all principalities and all powers. We see that in other scriptures. With everything looking to Him and Him looking to the Father and we looking to them. He is going to transform our lowly bodies from the physical to the spiritual. We'll be together in the millennium and all through eternity as spiritual citizens in God's Kingdom.

We know this whole thing is a process, from the physical to the spiritual. When you look at this concept of being citizens of heaven, it's interesting to realize. Maybe there's some history with us if we came out of one of the denominations of the world, because a lot of them look at these phrases like this being citizens of heaven as their church being God's Kingdom now. They're citizens of God's Kingdom by being in that church now. That sort of comes from the way Paul says things. There are a couple of scriptures along that line. One is in Ephesians 1 and this is where they get that idea. We know better than that, but I'm trying to make a point here.

Ephesians 1:3. *Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ: (KJV)*

Comparing that with Ephesians 2:6, it goes on to say:

Ephesians 2:6. *And has raised [us] up together and made [us] sit together in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus: (KJV)*

Does that mean that we are now in heaven? Well, we know that is not what it means. What he is talking about is that he is looking forward to the responsibilities and the outlook we have and it's just translated that way. Again, it makes it a little confusing. Paul's concepts are fine and sometimes we have to dig pretty hard and do a little analysis to understand what he is really talking about there. We don't take that literally. Even though that's very religious sounding and a lot of people will grasp at that and they'll think, "Maybe symbolically we're sitting at Christ's right hand right now." The way Paul is processing this he is just projecting that thought forward into the Kingdom of God where Christ is at God's right hand. Like Les said, we're raised up out of baptism,

but we know we are not in heaven then. It just starts the process. But again, a lot of denominations think that they are there right now. It's very religious sounding.

I don't know about you, but really religious people scare me a bit. They tend to creep me out a bit in some ways. I'm not saying they are bad people at all, but they get very zealous. Sometimes we even have those really zealous people in the church as you know. They kind of scare me a bit too. The reason I'm saying this is because I've known people that have left the church because the church wasn't religious enough for them. Again the point being that they will take some of these scriptures literally and they will run with them. Some of the zealous folks out there will hear something on the internet that's some kind of a "new truth" and they will run with it.

Part of the point I'm trying to get to here is I've heard someone say once that they would rather be spiritual than religious. I can agree with that and I hope that we all do really. We want to be spiritual without all the religious trappings. In other words, we don't need to go around with our religion on our shirt sleeve, bragging about how righteous we are and all of that. We don't want to be big ornaments which we see. We want to be spiritual and do the right thing with our lives. Remember the Pharisees did all the religious stuff, but what did Christ say about them? They were like empty tombs.

Again, Paul's phraseology doesn't detract from his concept, and it says all this a bit better in Colossians 3. What Paul says and everything that the writers of the New Testament and Old Testament say, but it hadn't gotten there yet historically; it points to the same thing. They point to God's Kingdom and our place that we will have in it.

Colossians 3:1. *If then you were raised with Christ (at baptism), seek those things which are above, ... (NKJV)*

That's what Paul was really expressing in those other verses, seek the way of God the Father and Jesus Christ (what Les was talking about in the sermonette). That's where our citizenship is. We need to find out, as Les said, what they want us to do, how they want us to do it and we need to apply that in our lives. We need to do it that way. That's where we start when we come up out of that watery grave, because we've buried the old man. We start with a new creation then.

1b) ... where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (NKJV)

So that puts the whole thing in proper perspective so we can understand. It doesn't mean that we are there now, as some take that literally. It's not as religious sounding, but it's the point that Paul is making here.

Let's see that also in Hebrews 11 and we will begin in verse 13.

Hebrews 11:13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (NKJV)*

As God's people we do embrace those promises. We are seeking God's Kingdom. That's what we should be doing with every part of our life. In a spiritual sense, we are strangers here, because we have a higher purpose. We have another destination that is in our thoughts spiritually. When it's talking about that word "confess" in the Greek it just means *an open or public confession, an acknowledgment*. In others words, it's the way that you express what you believe through your life, the way you conduct your life. It goes back to behavior, from the original meaning of that word. If we look at this concept from that perspective, it starts to become clear.

14) For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. (NKJV)

Spiritually our eyes are in a different place.

15) And truly if they had called to mind that [country] ... (NKJV)

That physical country, you could put there.

15b) ... from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. (NKJV)

Or to stay there; but now in verse 16, upon conversion,

16) But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly [country] (a spiritual country) Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (NKJV)

What city is that? That's the New Jerusalem, that heavenly city that we're going to have a part in.

So we know from these many scriptures that our citizenship is in heaven and that should be where our number one focus is, that we look forward to. But we are not there yet, and we cannot ignore the fact that we have a dual citizenship because we're still here. We're still walking around on the earth. We're held here by gravity. (Chuckle) Try to explain that to a little kid sometime, how the earth is rotating and spinning and we're still stuck to it.

Most of us here have our citizenship in the U.S. and a good many folks that are hearing this. But it makes a difference how we exercise our citizenship, even though we are still here in the physical. Back in Philippians 1:27, it talked about that word conversation, but there in the verb sense, I'd like to refer back to that. You can turn back there if you like.

Philippians 1:27. Only let your conversation ... (KJV)

We know that means conduct or behavior as a citizen.

27b) ... be as it becomes the gospel of Christ: (KJV)

In other words, exercise your citizenship as it becomes the gospel of Christ. If you look at it this way, the whole idea of our dual citizenship kind of hammers home the way we ought to conduct ourselves, the way we ought to live our lives. We used to say ambassadors for Christ, representing God's Kingdom and representing Christ now as we go about our business on the earth. Whatever we do, and we know this, it should be to glorify and to honor God. It is our personal work on the earth. Ephesians 2 says that.

Ephesians 2:10. *For we (God's people) are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, ... (NKJV)*

The way we live. We can also have bad works.

10b) ... which God prepared beforehand that we should walk (or live or conduct our lives) in them. (NKJV)

Workmanship here just means it's a product of God's recreating process, which Les referred to in the sermonette. The context in the preceding verse it said not of works lest any man could boast. That just means it's not our works that God is looking at, that He is interested in, it's what is being recreated in us and how we conduct ourselves as citizens.

11) Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands – (NKJV)

It's just a way of saying it's a physical process at different rituals and different times.

12) that at that time you were without Christ (before conversion), being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (not citizens, not even potential citizens) and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (NKJV)

In other words, you had no claim to citizenship in heaven, God's Kingdom to come. You had no claim at all at one point before conversion. So again, the point being this whole concept should impact how we exercise that citizenship, representing God in a way that pleases Him.

I'd like to go back and reread Philippians 1:27. I'm kind of wearing that one out, but again I'm driving to a point. I read it from the King James before and now from the New King James.

Philippians 1:27. *Only let your conduct ... (NKJV)*

That's our behavior as a future citizen of heaven.

27b) ... be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come (Paul says) and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, ... (NKJV)

The way you are living, and he did. We have examples of that to the Corinthians and other churches that he dealt with, that he actually raised up and served.

27 continued) ... that you stand fast in one spirit, ... (NKJV)

That's God's spirit; using God's spirit and producing those things that God's spirit produces in us, if we are using it.

27 continued) ... with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (NKJV)

So again each one of us has this dual citizenship, one with God, the spirit-filled citizenship and one with the U.S. or whatever country we find ourselves in. We want that citizenship to reflect the gospel of Christ and that's in how we conduct our lives, our affairs and everything we do. It's kind of true whatever country you travel through, if you have an opportunity to go to another country or another Feast site, aren't you representing yourself? You're representing your family, your church, your country and especially we want to represent God as we travel to these other places. We want to exercise that citizenship.

One time we were able to go to Fiji to a Feast site. When we were coming through customs, the custom guy wouldn't give me my Bible back. He was reading my Bible. He took it out of my suitcase. You know they open your suitcase and look at everything. He took my Bible out of there and he was reading all the notes I had in it. What was I going to say? I was a guest in Fiji. They have to stamp your passport or you're not there legally. That stamp says you entered the country legally. That way if you have to produce it for whatever reason, it says you are there legally and they can't put you on a plane and fly you out of there and drop you somewhere.

Also as a citizen we have certain rights we are entitled to. It's not wrong to assert those rights. We can see Paul's accounts. Let's turn to Acts. Paul left us some examples on how we can assert our rights and it's not wrong to do that. You remember the accounts in Acts where Paul is in trouble and the people that are traveling with him are in trouble. He's in and out of the "slammer" as we would say today. He's in a lot of trouble with different people.

Acts 23:1. *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, ... (NKJV)*

He was before the Sanhedrin at that point.

1b) ... said, "Men [and] brethren, I have lived (as a citizen, you could put in there) in all good conscience before God until this day." (NKJV)

If you looked in the King James, here's another place where that word has actually been translated into *living*. "I have lived in all good conscience." That's that word conversation in the King James. But he's on trial here and he's being criticized. He's saying, "Listen, is my citizenship and the way I conduct myself being called into account?" Paul says, "I've lived correctly in all good conscience." Hopefully we can say the same thing if we're ever in this kind of situation, either inside the U.S. or outside the country. The point is if we're reflecting God's standards and values in the way we conduct ourselves, we're representing that. We are, in fact, representing the gospel of Christ in our conduct.

We can also see some other principals here in the context and it kind of ties in with behavior, the way we conduct ourselves. You remember from the context when he was before the Sanhedrin and someone said something to him and he spoke kind of contrary to the high priest Ananias, and someone standing close by said, "Reach over and hit him! Smack him for talking to the high priest." Paul said he didn't know that was the high priest, so he backed up on that, because he was actually using that scripture in Exodus where it says you shouldn't speak evil of the ruler of your people. So even though Paul was in a situation where he was being wronged, and he teaches a little thing here, but it has to do with the way we conduct ourselves. He wanted to reflect the standards of God, so he backed up and apologized for speaking to the high priest that way. He didn't know he was the high priest. He was actually asserting his rights as a Pharisee as well as a Roman citizen.

We can speak or think evil about behaviors, but we need to be careful about the way we conduct ourselves with people in position, whether it's a religious or civil position. Sometimes it's hard to do that. We want to be vocal about certain things politically and it's hard to restrain ourselves from doing that. Again if we're pleasing God, we remember lessons like that. We are taught to give honor to whom honor belongs. There are a lot of principals on how to conduct ourselves as citizens in the Bible. It depends a lot on the culture, the customs, where you live and all of that, like Paul had to deal with all the time. We can see some of those lessons.

When we went down to Portland a few weeks ago, on the way home we stopped at Maryhill Museum. I know other listeners don't know what I'm talking about, but it's a museum that belonged to a very wealthy owner. It's an old mansion that's been turned into a museum. Anyhow, this individual evidently had friendship with some of the royalty of Romania and they had a whole display there on the king and queen of Romania. The point being that if you went before someone in royalty, you would want to know how to act. You would want to do it in a right way.

I was reading on the internet a while back that someone called Beyonce (I know she's an entertainer). She was at the Royal London Concert Hall giving a concert. A lot of entertainers like audience participation. She put a microphone in the face of the

Princess, the daughter of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, and wanted her to join in. Well she didn't know the words and it was very embarrassing to the Princess and the Royal Family. That's something we wouldn't want to do. I probably wouldn't be there in the first place because I don't even know who that is. But obviously any of these things, customs, protocols and whatever it is, that they violate our conscience as far as God's laws are. We don't want to do that. We shouldn't do that. Yes, God does expect us to use our mind and use wisdom in dealing with people and circumstances.

Many times we can do both. We can reflect the standards of God, keep His law and still fit in where we are. Most of us function in this world fairly well today. We have some examples again of Paul. He claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. In Acts 16 we can see that. Paul and Silas were put in stocks and they were beaten and put in prison. An earthquake came, the stocks fell off, the cuffs fell off, the chains fell off and God gave them a miraculous opportunity to escape, but they didn't. That's an interesting story because there is a lesson in it.

Acts 16:35. *And when it was day,(NKJV)*

The night had passed when the earthquake and everything had happened.

35b) ... the magistrates sent the officers, ... (NKJV)

That's the Romans that were in charge of the prison.

35 continued) ... saying, "Let those men go." (NKJV)

They had heard about the miracle and the things that had happened and they could have escaped and didn't. They became fearful because they really didn't know what was going on.

36) So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." (NKJV)

We know that, back in the context, this individual was actually converted by God through Paul and he and his household were baptized.

37) But Paul said to them, ... (NKJV)

His approach is interesting.

37b) ... "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, [and] have thrown [us] into prison. And now do they put us out secretly?" ... (NKJV)

Just kick us out of here and sweep this under the rug? Paul says,

*37 continued) ... "No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."
(NKJV)*

That's pretty gutsy! I don't know if I would do that. I'd probably run away in the middle of the night, but this is Paul's approach. He is asserting his right as a Roman citizen. He is saying as a Roman citizen, "I deserve better treatment than this, than what you have done to me. I know my rights." There's a saying that if you don't know your rights, you have given them away, and that's true. A lot of times we take things lying down where we wouldn't have to. But that's what Paul is saying here. He is saying, "I claim my rights as a Roman citizen to be treated better than what you've done to me here."

38) And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. (NKJV)

They were afraid because they knew Paul was right. He had rights and he deserved better treatment. They had actually broken the Roman law by what they did to him.

39) Then they came and pleaded with them and brought [them] out, and asked [them] to depart from the city. (NKJV)

I like the way they pleaded with them. What that's really saying is that they gave him a public apology for the way they treated him. They gave him the courtesy he deserved, the civility that they deserved because Paul called upon his rights.

There is an overriding purpose to all of this, because in Acts 23:11 as a reference scripture, remember what it says there. It says that Paul was told by God that he had to testify in Rome just as he did in Jerusalem. That's what the scripture says there. So it's interesting that God had a purpose for all of this and He probably inspired Paul. That was a courageous thing to say, "No, I know you're letting me out of here, but I'm not going until I get an apology from you guys." That's what he did. They didn't have to do that. The Romans were pretty cruel. It was a tyrannical government. But Paul had a purpose there. So again the point is that it is permissible to assert our citizenship. We have national rights, state rights and community rights and all of that. We need to be careful why we assert those rights. It's interesting the lessons we see from Paul in doing that. There's nothing wrong in doing that, but again, we need to ask ourselves what is our motive for doing it.

I heard it once being compared to using alcohol. It's not prohibition now. You can go into "Stop & Rob"; I mean the 7/11 in the middle of the night. I'm not sure how that works because I don't do that. It's not against the law to do that and you have a right to use alcohol. It's permissible, but you don't have a right to abuse it or be irresponsible with it and maybe cause an accident, cause a death or harm someone. But you can defend scripturally your right to moderately use alcohol. You can do that. You don't have to do that. You have a choice. We can exercise a right like that, but the point is we can do things right and we can do things wrong. It can be a sin if we abuse it and

became drunk and have bad behavior or bad conduct. Maybe get thrown in the drunk tank; we don't want to do that.

Again one of the reasons Paul was exercising his right as a Roman citizen was because he was told that he was going to preach the gospel in Rome. We can only hope we would act the same way if that opportunity ever befell us, but we would want to do it in the right way. You can exercise your rights in a right way or a wrong way.

Turn to Acts 22. Here's a little more of Paul's experience. Here Paul is invoking his Jewish, his Pharisee rights and his Roman rights. He's testifying. The mob wanted to kill him and a Roman commander took him under guard and wanted to know what was going on. Actually they wanted to beat it out of him if you read between the lines.

Acts 22:25. *And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" (NKJV)*

He is an innocent man. Frankly, Paul was just being smart here, wasn't he? He could have been beaten to death, but he asserted his rights. He knew he had rights to exercise there, so he did that. He knew when to play his Roman citizenship card and that's what he did. That's a good example for us if we ever needed to do that in a similar situation.

26) When the centurion heard [that], he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." (NKJV)

"You better be careful with this guy. We could wind up being in our own prison if we're not careful with this guy."

27) Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

28) The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born [a citizen]."

29) Then immediately those who were about to examine him ... (NKJV)

Which was a nice way of saying they were about to beat him.

29b) ... withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. (NKJV)

It was unlawful to do that. He had broken the Roman law to bind Paul.

30) The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from [his] bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. (NKJV)

They tried to settle it. In Acts 25:7 it says,

Acts 25:7. *When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, (NKJV)*

These were just a bunch of accusations.

8) *while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar (the state, the country) have I offended in anything at all." (NKJV)*

He hadn't done anything wrong. They were accusing him of speaking against the law of the Jews, because he was preaching the gospel of Christ that salvation was now available to the Gentiles. Of course being strict disciplinarians as far as the law went, they said, "No, that's not the way to salvation. You have to follow this whole list of do's and don'ts. That's the way you obtain salvation." But Paul stuck to the truth. He didn't deviate from that at all. He told them salvation was now from the Jews. Also when he spoke about the spiritual temple, when he talked about the kingdom, they put a spin on that and said, "Well, he's talking about the temple in Jerusalem. He's talking against it. He's using derogatory terms about it. When he's talking about a king, he's actually talking about Caesar." So they put a spin on that for their own ends. But Paul said he hadn't done any of that.

Acts 25:9. *But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, ... (NKJV)*

You can put there, a political favor. That's what he was doing.

9b) *... answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"*
10) *So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know." (NKJV)*

They had no case against him. "I'm not going back to Jerusalem," is what he said. He's already got a commission to go to Rome and also he knew he would be killed.

Remember all those individuals that took an oath that they were going to kill him? He knew if he got in the hands of those individuals and went back to Jerusalem, it would be one of those deals where you get shot in the back trying to escape. He might have got an arrow in the back or something like that. He asserted his right as a Roman citizen to be judged in front of Caesar's seat, administrators for him.

Again, we can only hope that if we were in a similar situation that we would be inspired the same way. The more you know about your rights and your responsibilities as a citizen, the better you can use them. That's what Paul was doing here. There may

come a day when we need to assert our rights to protect ourselves, and it wouldn't be wrong to do that in most cases. Again, we don't know what those circumstances would entail. We may have an opportunity to actually preach the gospel, to set an example. Again, we could do that a right way or a wrong way. A lot will hinge on the reasons and the circumstances we find ourselves in.

I sat and counted the other day, and maybe sometime you can do this as an exercise too. I counted all the jobs I've had all my life and I counted twenty-two. I started out at about twelve years old. A bunch of us kids lived in the country and a farmer gave us a job picking grapes. So I went from there crawling around the vineyards picking grapes at twelve years old to retiring from a much better job at much higher pay about forty years later. Just looking at all those different jobs and career changes that I've had to make, and hopefully I've done that in a right way, following Godly principals, a lot of times I've had to assert my rights. I had to invoke the civil rights law in 1964 which says I can practice my religion without discrimination. I've had to do that many times over the Sabbath. I even had a manager tell me one time, I think that was the last time I had to deal with it in my working life. He said, "I can't believe you worked for this company for twenty some years and never worked a Friday night." They wanted me to work nights. I told them I would work nights but I wouldn't be there on Friday night. So that's the way it played out. They didn't do anything, and I wasn't there. Paul goes on to say,

Acts 25:11. *"For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; ... (NKJV)*

"I'll die. If that's the sin you want to put on me, I'll do that."

11b) ... but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." (NKJV)

Again, he is asserting his rights.

12) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!" (NKJV)

In Acts 26:32, to kind of finish the story it says,

Acts 26:32. *Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." (NKJV)*

In other words, they were bound to respect his rights. They had to follow through on his appeal.

When you think about conducting ourselves as citizens and living our lives as we should, we have a lot of scriptural reminders like the parable of the sower, how things of the world can actually choke God's word and affect the way we live. It's getting harder and harder, isn't it? It really is as it becomes a more secular world. I even heard a

protestant minister say that this is a time of extremists and liberalism. That is what we are faced with. I was talking with a friend recently and he was saying how bad it is getting. It's close to the end and it is. It's been trending that way for a long time. I said, "Yes, and if we didn't know what we know about our future, we would think that Satan is winning." A lot of this is Satan's doing because he does have a short time and he is fanning the flames. He's throwing a piece of wood on wherever he can at just about every level of society. It distresses us and God says we should be sighing and crying for the things that are going on around us. Anyhow, I went on to tell this individual, I said, "Satan isn't winning. Evil is just surpassing the good right now." That's kind of where we are at. God wins at the end.

Turn to Romans 13. Here's a chapter that gave me a lot of trouble for a long time. Christ's gospel teaches the same things consistently about our conduct and it's about our dual citizenship, about how we should conduct ourselves. In Romans 13:1, these are Paul's instructions through the authority of Jesus Christ on how to conduct ourselves as Christian citizens in whatever society and whatever culture we find ourselves.

Romans 13:1. *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (NKJV)*

The King James says, "ordained", which means *appointed*. That's what the Greek word means. Ordained actually means *appointed in an orderly manner*.

I'd like to quote a commentary. I think they have it pretty accurate. It says, "The state itself, no less than God's Church (and he's just making a comparison with this church) is a divine institution existing by God's permission and authority and absolutely necessary for the continuity of the race of people on the earth, and it is the unqualified duty of the Christian to submit to it except in those situations where doing so would break the commandments of God."

That is certainly in agreement with Acts where Peter said before the Sanhedrin, "I have to obey God rather than you. I'm not going to stop what I'm doing. I'm going to obey God."

Continuing with the quote: "This cannot mean that the shameful deeds of evil rulers are ever in any manner approved by God." (We agree with that.) "It is not any particular implementation of the state's authority which is 'ordained' of God, but the existence of such authority."

God ordains us so anarchy doesn't reign over the earth. Continuing on: "Without such constituted authority, the whole world would sink into chaos and ruin." (And it would.) "Unbridled human nature is a savage beast that lies restless and uneasy under the restraint imposed by the state." (We are restrained by laws, etc.) "Being ever ready at

the slightest opportunity to break its chains and ravage the world with blood and terror.” That’s from James Coffman Commentary.

What is a good example that we have of that today? How about the Arab Spring? That may be a product of some covert engineering by certain countries. We don’t know and I don’t want to get into that. But look at the chaos and anarchy going on. Look at the killing and how many thousands of people have lost their lives in that. A lot of people will exploit things like that and there are probably a lot of deaths involved there that are nothing more than old grudges and hurts. There’s been a ton of killing there. There are terrorists infiltrating those situations. There’s nothing to restrain it. There are no laws, nothing.

Going on in Romans 13:2.

Romans 13:2. *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (NKJV)*

Judgment on how we conduct ourselves.

3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. (NKJV)

So everything has to do with our conduct and behavior as a Christian citizen. Real praise comes from God. That’s the praise that we want. I’m not saying it and scripture is not saying it, that there’s some kind of unconditional protection, because there isn’t. We will see a scripture in a little bit where brethren early in the church were not protected and they suffered persecution.

4) For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to [execute] wrath on him who practices evil. (NKJV)

Again, you can do things right or you can do things wrong in the way you conduct your life.

5) Therefore [you] must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. (NKJV)

That is a reference to moral conscience. In other words, we are accountable morally, spiritually to God for what we do and the way we conduct ourselves and do things.

6) For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. (NKJV)

We don't like that, but we do that. What did Christ teach His disciples? Pay taxes. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's. Pay taxes.

7) Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes [are due], customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

8) Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (NKJV)

Then it gives the commandments. Then it talks about how to conduct yourself, human to human and face to face. That's what we do. We have a relationship with God which is embodied in the first commandments and then it gives the commandments of how we should deal with humans here on the earth. It's no accident that it is phrased that way. Verse 10 makes a point.

10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love [is] the fulfillment of the law. (NKJV)

The way we conduct ourselves and the way we keep that law, and in some cases, no matter what the state says. So there is emphasis here on God's love; if you look that word up, it's agape; Godly love. It's used in different senses here. The point is that it is an absolutely essential ingredient in the way we conduct our citizenship, our lives both now and in the future. It is essential for us.

11) And [do] this, knowing the time, that now [it is] high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we [first] believed. (NKJV)

Remember what Christ said to Pilate when He was being falsely accused? He said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight." But we don't do that. We know that God's Kingdom is coming. There is no doubt about that. Our fight is a spiritual one in how we behave and that includes the exercising of our citizenship. Is it pleasing to God? It's not always easy, but is it pleasing to God? That should be the criteria by which we operate. Continuing in verse 12,

12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, ... (NKJV)

We could say, before our conversion.

12b) ... and let us put on the armor of light. (NKJV)

And what does light symbolize? It symbolizes Godly character, reflecting God's standards and His values, not the world's. That's what we came out of.

It kind of reminds me a little, and this is a reference scripture, of Ephesians 6 where it talks about the whole armor of God.

Ephesians 6:13. *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (NKJV)*

Where are we eventually going to stand? We're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we are going to give account of how we conducted our lives and conducted our lives as a citizen, if you will.

Romans 13:13. *Let us walk (live or behave) properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.
14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts. (NKJV)*

That's talking about overcoming on our part, because a lot of those things are what we want to do, carnally speaking.

Let's turn over to 1 Peter 2. In the early church there were individuals that suffered severe persecution and left us an important lesson along this line. If you read the commentaries and historians; Peter wrote approximately in the mid '60s, ('64 or '65 AD) and the historians say around that time Nero burned Rome. Like any good politician, he had to have a scapegoat, so he picked on the Christians. It was a new religion and something that was causing a lot of controversy and people looked on it strangely, so there was an easy target. That's what he was doing. As far as Rome went, he started persecuting the Christians in Rome. He would burn them and feed them to the animals and do all kinds of things. There are just horrible stories about that if you ever have read Foxes Book of Martyrs.

Anyhow, this is spreading and this is where Peter is writing to because the brethren are afraid this is going to spread to them. In the first parts of 1 Peter, it talks about some provinces that are outside of Rome. Peter makes some very important statements.

1Peter 2:9. *But you [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, ... (NKJV)*

A spiritual country, that we saw in those scriptures earlier.

9b) ... His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (NKJV)

We do that by the way we live. That's the way they did then. That's what Peter is encouraging them to do, to continue doing that. Don't stop doing that, because you may face death any day. The Romans may march in these provinces any day and just start gathering up Christians. Think back to Germany in World War II. I should be careful saying that. I got into trouble once for mentioning Germany. It's a great country. Some people in it did some bad things.

10) *who once [were] not a people but [are] now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (NKJV)*

The process that we have been called into.

11) *Beloved, I beg [you] as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. (NKJV)*

That's talking about your spiritual life. The Greek for "sojourners and pilgrims" just means *foreigners that have taken up residence*. That's basically what we have. We didn't have a say about where we were born and where we would grow up, but this is where we are. It just means we have a future and a far greater destination and a greater allegiance to that citizenship in heaven, that spiritual country, God's Kingdom that we are looking forward to. Verse 12 starts to hammer the point home.

12) *having your conduct ... (NKJV)*

Your behavior, the way you live.

12b) *... honorable among the Gentiles, ... (NKJV)*

That word Gentiles is just a general reference to the nation that you find yourself in.

12 continued) *... that when they speak against you as evildoers, ... (NKJV)*

Which many were doing; they were using the Christians as a scapegoat. It says a lot of times in Acts, it was referred to as "the way." That's what they called Christians. In fact that's where they were first called Christians, in Acts.

12 continued) *... they may, by [your] good works which they observe (they have to see something), glorify God in the day of visitation. (NKJV)*

And that's reference to Jesus Christ's return.

13) *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,*

14) *or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and [for the] praise of those who do good.*

15) *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men – (NKJV)*

You can't just tell someone something, but if you are demonstrating that by your life, they can observe and see that. The question for us is, what are we demonstrating? Hopefully we are doing things right. I know we don't do that perfectly.

17) *Honor all [people]. Love (there's that pesky "agape" again) the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (NKJV)*

All in one breath. It depends on your approach, how you're doing things with your life.

19) *For this [is] commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. (NKJV)*

And many times we have in our lives. We suffered when we didn't deserve it, but sometimes we have. It goes on to say that in verse 20.

20) *For what credit [is it] if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? (You might actually deserve it) But when you do good ... (NKJV)*

Doing it God's way and living God's way.

20b) *... and suffer, if you take it patiently, this [is] commendable before God. (NKJV)*

God sees our behavior. Again, if we want that praise from God, it's going to govern and motivate us the way we live and conduct ourselves.

21) *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: (NKJV)*

These brethren in the whole context here were persecuted for living as Christ lived. They were conducting their lives after that pattern, after that model, just as we should do. When you think about it, this whole idea of dual citizenship isn't new. We have Christ's example on that, don't we? He came into the world under Roman tyranny, He functioned as a citizen of that society, He rendered to Caesar what was Caesar's and taught His disciples to do that. He was unjustly, illegally tried and crucified by the Romans. He could have rebelled against them.

I'm kind of a fan of historical novels and I was reading one recently. They add some drama to the history. I was reading once where it talked about Masada. I know there have been documentaries on that, but it told about the nine hundred and sixty some people that committed suicide there. It took about two or three years (I don't remember exactly) to build the siege ramp in order for the Romans to assault Masada. When it was imminent, then they committed suicide; women and children, everybody. They used slave labor, mostly women, to build that siege ramp. The whole time they were doing that, they were being assaulted by those individuals on Masada, by Jewish people that had fled Jerusalem.

Let's turn to an example in Matthew 5. In the way he was telling these individuals, Peter was encouraging them. Some commentators say, and I've heard it preached, that Peter is an apostle of hope. Well, he's giving them some encouragement, but he's also doing

some other things. He's repeating what he learned from Christ, and a lot of it he heard the hard way.

In Matthew 5, and I don't know if you've ever looked at it this way, but in the context of what I'm talking about, our citizenship (the way act, behave and live our lives) is just what Christ was talking about here in Matthew 5, beginning in verse 10.

Matthew 5:10. *Blessed [are] those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11) *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*

12) *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great [is] your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NKJV)*

Isn't it interesting what is said in verses 13 and 14.

13) *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? (We know this is a metaphor) It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

14) *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. (NKJV)*

If we are conducting our lives in a right way and putting these scriptures together, people are going to know, even if you might not say that you are a Christian and have different values and standards. That's because we don't do some of the things we could be doing or what folks are doing around us, sometimes in our own family. Some of us have good families, but some of us don't. We need to be different, that's the point.

15) *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all [who are] in the house. (NKJV)*

Here's instruction in verse 16.

16) *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works ... (NKJV)*

Reflected in the way you live your life.

16b) *... and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

Which is the whole point, the way we live and conduct our lives, to honor and glorify God the Father and Jesus Christ. So here in the example that Peter is using, if you tie this all in together, he's pointing directly to Christ, our pattern and our model.

I Peter 2:22. *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth, (NKJV)*

That goes clear back to Isaiah 53, if you want to look that up.

23) Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; (He didn't conduct Himself that way) when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; (NKJV)

That's a constant goal for us.

24) Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – ... (NKJV)

Might conduct our lives a certain way.

24b) ... by whose stripes you were healed.

25) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (NKJV)

That is the one that's going to give us that citizenship in heaven eventually.

So the whole point here again is that we have this dual citizenship. We can enjoy our rights as long as we have them in this country or wherever we may find ourselves, but one of these days, those may be gone. We ought to be very happy to be citizens here, but more importantly, we should be happy and overjoyed to have the potential (and we are working towards that now) to be citizens of heaven, because that citizenship can never ever be taken away.