

Citizenship Chapter

No. 243

Introduction.

I. About the year 58 A.D. Paul wrote to the saints at Rome. The opening chapters of this epistle show how both Jews and Gentiles stand condemned without Jesus Christ. In chapter 8 Paul enumerates some of the special blessings Christians enjoy in Christ and in the next few chapters he proves that God has not been unfaithful to the promise He made to Abraham. Then in the closing chapters of the book he expounds on some of the practical aspects of Christianity.

II. The 13th chapter of this epistle has been called “The Citizenship Chapter” of the Bible. It has been given this title because it is filled with instructions regarding our duties to the government under which we live. These instructions were greatly needed in Paul’s day and are still needed in our time.

A. This chapter reads as follows. (Rom. 13:1-14).

13 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. ²Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: ⁴for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. ⁵Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. ⁶For this cause *ye* pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God’s service, attending continually upon this very thing.

⁷Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. ⁸Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. ⁹For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. ¹⁰Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.

¹¹And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we *first* believed. ¹²The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof* ASV

B. There are a number of vital lessons we can learn from this chapter about the government and our relationship to it.

I. **Dual Citizenship** - “The Citizenship Chapter” of the Bible sets forth the fact that a Christian has a dual citizenship.

A. As Christians we have a **citizenship in heaven according to Philippians 3:20**.

1. We are only pilgrims and sojourners on this earth.

a. The Bible tells us of the Patriarchs. (Heb. 11:13-16).

13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

b. The Bible also tells us that we, like the patriarch, are pilgrims and sojourners on this earth. (1 Pet. 2:11).

c. **Heaven is our real home.** It is the place where are treasures are. It is place where we will spend eternity. By God’s grace when we have been there 10,000 years and then 10,000 times 10,000 years our time there has just begun.

B. **Even though heaven is our real home**, we have a **temporary citizenship in the world**. Since we have a dual citizenship, we have a dual responsibility.

1. We have the responsibility to **obey the laws of God**. (Psa. 40:8).

2. We also have the responsibility to **obey the laws of the land**. (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13).

a. **J.W. McGarvey** commenting on this passage says: “As we understand it, the idea which the apostle is seeking to convey (in the thirteenth chapter of Romans) is that duties to God and duties to the state are parallel, rather than antagonistic. If the Christian is true to his religion, he need fear neither state nor God, for God rules, generally speaking, in and through the state, as well as in his providences.” (McGarvey-Pendleton Commentary)

b. **Moses E. Lard** said: “All civil governments derive their origin and authority from God, and when doing right, have his sanction. He therefore requires his children to be obedient to them; and where they fail, they resist not merely the government but him.” (Quoted in Abilene Christian College Lectures, 1941, pp. 184-185.)

c. **As Christians are to submit to the laws of the land unless they conflict with God’s laws**. (Acts 5:29).

3. Not only are we to obey the authorities but **we are to cooperate with them**. (Tit. 3:1).

- a. Paul states Christians are to be ready for every good work. Notice the context in which these words are found. They are given in connection with his injunction to obey the rulers. Christians are to cooperate with the government in every good work.
 - b. This refutes the argument of those who maintain the Christian is to have nothing to do with the government. A Christian can use his talents and skills for good works. .
4. In addition to the things we have mentioned, we are also taught to **pray for those in positions of authority**. (1 Tim. 2:1-4).
- a. Instead of being critical of our leaders, we should pray that God will guide them.
 - b. The God of the universe will in turn bless and guide them.

II. **Tax-Paying Citizens** - “The Citizenship Chapter” sets forth the fact that we are to be tax-paying citizens. (Rom. 13:7).

- A. Our Master gave us examples of this teaching. (Matt. 17:24-27; 22:17-21).
- B. **It is regrettable that there are Christians** who have forgotten this teaching of the Lord and try to cheat the government by not paying the tax they rightfully owe.
 - 1. One Bible commentator says, “This sin has become so universal that it is well nigh regarded as a virtue.”
 - 2. This is tragic and many people, including some Christians, will lose their souls for that very reason.

III. **Honest Citizens** - “The Citizenship Chapter” of the Bible teaches Christians are to be honest citizens. (Rom. 13:8).

- A. Once I read a true story of an **old gentleman** who made a visit early one morning to his son’s home to pay a small debt he had incurred only the day before. He made it a habit in life to promptly pay his debts. He knew that only the wicked borrow and pay not again. (Ps. 37:21).
- B. **Years ago a widow signed a note for a friend for a small amount of money**. This so-called friend skipped town without paying the debt. It happened that the money was owed to a Jewish lawyer. She went to the lawyer and told him the circumstances, promising the money would be paid back a little each week. When the last installment was made the Jew handed back part of the whole sum saying, “I have had much dealings with those who said they were followers of Christ. Until now, I have never been much impressed.” The lady possessed the honesty that draws men to Christ.
- C. **A storekeeper once went away for the day and left the clerk in charge**. A customer came in and asked a favor of the clerk, which meant he would have to do something dishonest. The customer argued, “You can do it, if you want to, because the boss is out.” The clerk looked the man straight in the face and said, “You are mistaken. My boss is Jesus Christ and He is never out! When we are tempted to be dishonest, it would be well to remember the words of this clerk and also the words of Solomon. (Prov. 15:3; Eccles. 12:14).

IV. **Neighbor-Loving Citizens** - “The Citizenship Chapter” sets forth that Christians are to be neighbor-loving citizens. (Rom. 13:9, 10).

for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. ⁹For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. ¹⁰Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is

the fulfilment of the law.

- A. The Christian does not work ill toward his neighbor. He is not malicious or vindictive.
- B. He loves his neighbor as self and treats him as he desires to be treated in life.
- C. This means that he treats others with love, respect, justice, and mercy since this is the way he wants to be treated.

V. **Christ-Clothed Citizens** - “The Citizenship Chapter” affirms that Christians are to be Christ-clothed citizens. (Rom. 13:14).

- A. **Adam Clarke** says this mode of speech was taken from the stage players of that time. They assumed the name and garments of the person they were to portray, and endeavored as far as possible to imitate him.
- B. No doubt the apostle used this practice as the basis of his admonition to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - 1. We must act, think, and speak like Jesus.
 - 2. We are to imitate the Master - Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:21).

Footsteps of Jesus

Mary B.C. Slade, 19th Cent. -Asa B. Everett, 19th Cent.

Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling, Come, follow me!
And we see where Thy footprints falling lead us to Thee.
Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow;
We will follow the steps of Jesus where e'er they go.

Tho' they lead o'er the cold, dark mountains, seeking His sheep,
Or along by Siloam's fountains, helping the weak,
Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow;
We will follow the steps of Jesus where e'er they go.

If they lead thro' the temple holy, preaching the word,
Or in homes of the poor and lowly, serving the Lord,
Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow;
We will follow the steps of Jesus where e'er they go.

Then at last, when on high He sees us, our journey done,
We will rest where the steps of Jesus end at His throne.
Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow;
We will follow the steps of Jesus where e'er they go.

Conclusion

- I. In the book of Galatians Paul informs us how to initially put on Christ. (Gal. 3:26, 27).
- II. A person puts on Christ in baptism. He sheds the garments of sin and replaced them with the garments of righteousness. He leaves the state of condemnation and becomes forgiven and saved.
- III. Will you shed the filthy rags of sin and put on Christ in baptism? Will you come to Jesus as we stand and sing?

