

# Living in Babylon

Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Bible Matters Sources

Introduction: 1Peter 5:13

- A. As Americans, we are blessed
  - 1. We have freedoms unknown in other countries
  - 2. We have a great standard of living
- B. America also lays many stumbling-blocks before a Christian
- C. How do we balance our commitment to God with our citizenship to the state
  - 1. How does our faith impact our American citizenship?
  - 2. How can we avoid having our faith damaged by America?

## I. THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN AMERICAN

- A. Freedom
  - 1. America was founded on the principles of freedom for its citizens
  - 2. Especially important is religious freedom; we have the liberty to practice and promote New Testament Christianity without fear
- B. Wealth
  - 1. Many here who may not feel they are wealthy, yet, in comparison to many other parts of the world past and present, we are all wealthy
  - 2. We enjoy a higher standard of living than many dream about
- C. We should be thankful daily for these blessings

## II. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

- A. Compliance with laws and paying taxes - Rom. 13:1-7
  - 1. In all things except specific instructions that oppose the commands of God - Acts 5:29
  - 2. No such law exists that demands Christians sin at present
- B. Pray for civil leaders - 1Tim. 2:1-3

## III. OUR CIVIL AND SPIRITUAL CITIZENSHIPS

- A. It is important for us to understand the relationship between our civil and spiritual citizenships
- B. Phil. 3:20 - Our citizenship is in Heaven
- C. Matt. 6:33 - We are to pursue the duties of our spiritual citizenship first
- D. John 18:36 - Our primary citizenship is not linked with earthly land & borders
- E. Earthly citizenship is good and right
  - 1. Acts 22:23-29 - Paul mentioned his citizenship to spare himself from the whip and to gain better treatment from the authorities
  - 2. Acts 25:10-12 - Paul's Roman citizenship allowed an appeal to Caesar

## IV. LIVING IN BABYLON

- A. The view of America as the "Promised Land" for God's people
  - 1. Even now there exists a view, sometimes more unconscious than conscious, that America is the "promised land," that its people are "God's people," and that God favors and approves all things American

2. This goes back to the founding of America with Puritan colonists
  3. Many believed that the bounty we enjoy is proof of God's approval
  4. Many read the addresses of God to Israel and applied it to America
  5. It is easy to look at America as the new Israel and Americans as the new Israelites
- B. This is not true in spite of the facts that...
1. Many Americans do not consider God as God; they act like Israel
  2. Exile and captivity would do many Americans a lot of good
  3. America is not Israel, nor are Americans the new Israelites
    - a. Scriptures make no reference to America
    - b. There is no indication that Americans are intrinsically holier than other people; morally bankrupt from the perspective of many
    - c. There is no indication that God blesses America more than anyone else
- C. This is a dangerous view
1. How many times are American actions rationalized by religionists?
  2. It is almost as if whatever America does is acceptable
  3. Just because it is the American way does not make it right with God; we must always keep that in mind
  4. We can be thankful that there are many godly people in America, but never forget: America is full of many more ungodly people
- D. We tend to think American Democracy is the only Biblically approved system of government
1. While American democracy is a good system, we must remember that Christianity is not a democracy
  2. It is a monarchy, and Christ is its King - 1Tim. 6:15
  3. Elders of churches are appointed as God's shepherds, agents of the King - 1Peter 5:1-4
  4. We don't vote for a king; we don't protest His rule
  5. American democracy also ironically makes us feel smugly superior because we are all equal
  6. In Christ, we are all under the rule of the King and need to learn subjection and obedience to Him - Rom. 6:12-23
- E. We believe the American view of liberty is from God
1. Americans have a strong view of individual liberty, a value worth fighting for to the death
  2. In Christ, liberties are to be sacrificed without question - Rom. 14 - 15:3
  3. We must be willing to forsake liberty for unity of the faith 1Cor. 10:23-24
- F. We think American capitalism is Biblical and the only way that works
1. We must remember, that many characteristics of capitalism have no place in the church
  2. Self-seeking, greed, taking advantage of others, taking more thought for profit than for human kindness are all things that capitalism rewards, but are not for the church nor for the Christian - Gal. 5:19-21
  3. Christianity is about people and souls, not about money - 1Tim. 6:13-19
- G. American pride is dangerous for Christians

1. Confidence in our nation is good; pride is bad - Prov. 8:13-16, 11:2
  2. It has little place in the Christian life - 2Cor. 11:16-30; 1Cor. 10:23-24
- H. In a sad irony, the security that we have in America from violence in many ways has led to a laxness in spiritual matters
1. The persecutions of the early church strengthened believers and led them to focus on the unity of the faith - 1Peter; James 1
  2. With peace and security, many have redirected their focus to material matters or enhancing the quality of life in this world
  3. We must not allow the security that America provides us to cause us to relax in the spiritual battle we are waging against worldliness, sin, and materialism - Eph. 6:10-18
- I. Certain aspects of Americanism can hinder our faith
1. It is not that American ideals are inherently hostile to God; it is that they intrude on our citizenship in the Kingdom of God leading us to be poor citizens there.
  2. We must remember that we are Christians first and Americans second
  3. Our spiritual citizenship is to inform our civil citizenship, and not the other way around
  4. We can survive in America and enjoy our citizenship here; we just need to constantly be diligent to not conform to America, but continue to transform according to Christ - Rom. 12:1

Conclusion:

- A. Heb. 11:13-16