

Living in Babylon

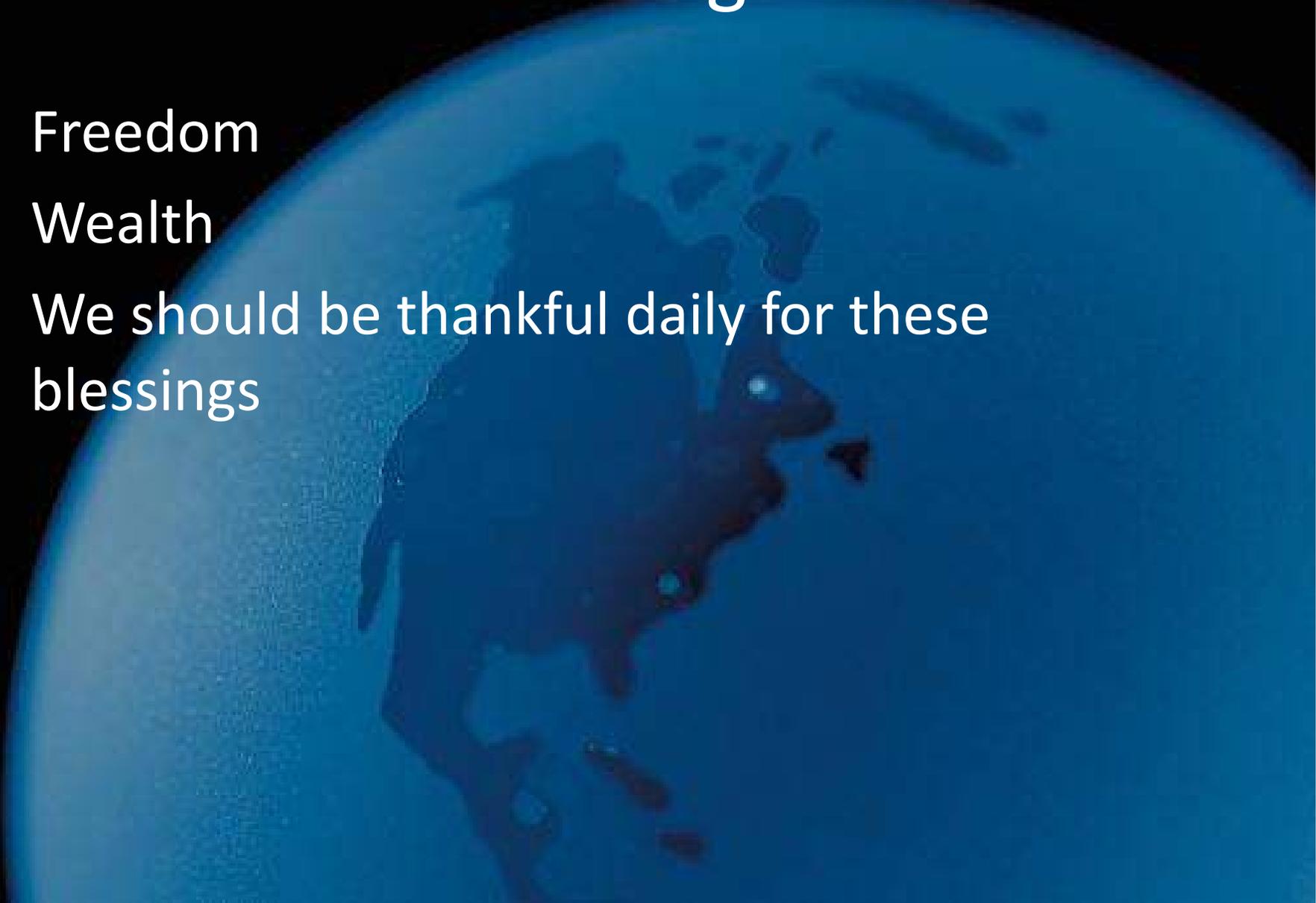
1Peter 5:13 - “She who is in Babylon,
elect together with you, greets you;
and so does Mark my son.”

Living in Babylon

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

The Benefits Of Being An American

- Freedom
- Wealth
- We should be thankful daily for these blessings



Our Responsibilities As American Christians

- Rom. 13:1-7 - “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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 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. 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. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 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.”

Our Responsibilities As American Christians

- Acts 5:29 - “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: We ought to obey God rather than men.”
- In all things except specific instructions that oppose the commands of God
- No such law exists that demands Christians sin at present

Our Responsibilities As American Christians

- 1Tim. 2:1-3 - “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior”

Our Civil And Spiritual Citizenships

- Our citizenship is in Heaven
 - Phil. 3:20 - “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”
- We are to pursue the duties of our spiritual citizenship first
 - Matt. 6:33 - “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”
- Our primary citizenship is not linked with earthly land and borders
 - John 18:36 - “Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

Our Civil And Spiritual Citizenships

- Earthly citizenship is good and right
 - Paul mentioned his citizenship to spare himself from the whip and to gain better treatment from the authorities
 - Acts 22:23-29
 - Paul's Roman citizenship allowed him to appeal to Caesar
 - Acts 25:10-12

Living In Babylon

- The view of America as the "Promised Land" for God's people
 - Scriptures make no reference to America
 - There is no indication that Americans are intrinsically holier than other people; actually may be morally bankrupt from the perspective of many
 - There is no indication that God blesses America more than anyone else

Living In Babylon

- We tend to think American Democracy is the only Biblically approved system of government
 - While American democracy is a good system, we must remember that Christianity is not a democracy
 - It is a monarchy, and Christ is its King
 - 1Tim. 6:15 - “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords”

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- Elders of churches are appointed as God's shepherds, agents of the King
 - 1Peter 5:1-4
 - We don't vote for a king
 - We don't protest His rule
- American democracy also ironically makes us feel smugly superior because we are all equal
 - In Christ, we are all under the rule of the King and need to learn subjection and obedience to Him
 - Rom. 6:12-23

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- We believe the American view of liberty is from God
 - Americans have a strong view of individual liberty, a value worth fighting for to the death
- In Christ, liberties are to be sacrificed without question
 - Rom. 14 - 15:3
- We must be willing to forsake liberty for unity of the faith
 - 1Cor. 10:23-24

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- We think American capitalism is Biblical and the only way that works
 - We must remember, that many characteristics of capitalism have no place in the church
 - Self-seeking, greed, taking advantage of others, taking more thought for profit than for human kindness are all things that capitalism rewards
 - Gal. 5:19-21
- Christianity is about people and souls, not about money
 - 1Tim. 6:13-19

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- American pride is dangerous for Christians
 - Confidence in our nation is good; partisan pride is bad
 - Prov. 8:13-16, 11:2
 - It has no place in the Christian life
 - 2Cor. 11:16-30; 1Cor. 10:23-24

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- In a sad irony, the security that we have in America from violence in many ways has led to a laxness in spiritual matters
 - The persecutions of the early church strengthened believers and led them to focus on the unity of the faith - 1Peter; James 1
 - With peace and security, many have redirected their focus to material matters or enhancing the quality of life in this world
 - We must not relax in the spiritual battle we are waging against worldliness, sin, and materialism
 - Eph. 6:10-18

Living In Babylon

- Certain aspects of Americanism can hinder our faith
 - 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.
 - We must remember that we are Christians first and Americans second
 - Our spiritual citizenship is to inform our civil citizenship, and not the other way around
 - We must remember to conform to Christ and not to our country

Heb. 11:13-16

- “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. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”