

Theme: What does it mean to be a Christian and a citizen of the USA?
What is my call as a Christian citizen?

I. Intro - Christian Citizenship?

- A. Most of you probably did not notice - but there is an election coming up :)
- B. The election consumes many people today
- C. Question wanted teaching that “goes beyond voting and staking out positions on issues” - how to be citizens of heaven and earth faithfully
- D. What is our call in this age? What does Scripture say?

II. The Foundation: The Gospel

- A. Everything Peter is saying is built on the Gospel
But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9–10
 - 1. He is starting a new section of the letter in v11
 - 2. The whole first section is focused on the Gospel
 - 3. First section comes to a crescendo in vv9-10
 - 4. We are now part of God’s people, His nation!
 - 5. The Gospel changes everything!
- B. The Gospel is the foundation for how we live
 - 1. It is the lens through which we view life

- 2. It is the foundation on which we build the rest of life
- 3. So we can not turn to our call as citizens apart from the Gospel and our call as Christians
- 4. The Gospel must fill my heart, mind - and mouth!

III. Our New Status: Aliens and Strangers

- A. We are aliens and strangers - in our own country!
Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens and strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11
 - 1. The first result of the Gospel is that we are now citizens in God’s nation - the church
 - 2. The next result of the Gospel is that we are now aliens and strangers in our own country!
 - a. He used the same idea in 1 Peter 1:1
 - b. Same 2 words used by Abraham in Genesis 23:4
 - c. The idea is that we are those who reside in a foreign land - a resident alien, a sojourner
- B. Implications of being aliens and strangers
 - 1. To be at home with God is to be a sojourner in this world; to be at home in this world is to be an exile from God. There is no in between.
 - 2. This does not mean that we are no longer American citizens - but it does mean that our first citizenship is God’s kingdom!
 - 3. This allegiance to the kingdom of God will affect every area of how we fulfill our role as citizens of the USA.

4. However, this also means that there is no such thing as a “Christian nation” - it is a theological impossibility, for God’s nation is the church, and every other nation is the Babylon of our exile.
5. Thus, our calling is not to make America a “Christian nation” again. It never was, and it never can be one.
6. As aliens and strangers our primary call and concern is not politics, but rather than Gospel and fulfilling God’s individual callings in our life.
 - a. For some, politics will be a life calling - but even for them the call of the Gospel and our heavenly citizenship is primary
 - b. For most of us politics is not even a secondary calling - it is simply a minor part of fulfilling our calling as citizens
 - c. When Christians look to politics to solve our nations deepest problems it is a sure sign we do not understand our role as aliens and strangers

IV. Living As Christian Citizens

- A. Christian citizens live holy lives, abstaining from sin

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

 1. First call - abstain from sinful desires (fleshly lusts)
 2. These desires may be deep rooted - but they war against our soul
 3. Peter is clearly thinking of things like partying & sexual sin

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human **desires**, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, **lust**, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:1–5

- a. Same word ‘desires’ in 1 Peter 2:11, 4:2, 3
 - b. This is 3 of the 4x used in 1 Peter
 - c. Christians can not have lives characterized by this type of behavior
4. Christian citizenship is a call to living a holy, godly life in the midst of a sinful, ungodly culture - no matter the cost
 - a. 1 Pet 4:4 - they heap abuse on you for not joining in
 - b. 1 Pet 2:12 - they even accuse you of doing wrong!
 5. Christian citizenship will mean we will often be out of step with the culture morally
- B. Christian citizens devote themselves to good works

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 1 Peter 2:12

 1. Not only abstain from sin - we are devoted to good

2. We do not live lives physically separate from unbelievers - we do good works among them and for them
3. We do this even when they are accusing us of doing wrong - we do not return evil and insults - we do good (1 Peter 2:12, 23)
4. Christian citizenship calls us to simply be good, kind, thoughtful neighbors

C. Christian citizens fulfill their callings in the world

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. ¹ Peter 2:12

1. 1 Peter 2:13-3:17 lists the various callings and relationships in society and how we must fulfill them
2. A Christian must fulfill their callings to the government, employers, spouses, and our neighbors
3. I have taught a lengthy series on calling - see it on the website for more information about the various callings we have and how to fulfill them
4. This is a critical component of being a Christian citizen - most of our life is spent in fulfilling our various callings where God serves others through our actions
 - a. A mom caring for a child is acting as a Christian citizen, raising the next generation
 - b. A mechanic fixing a car honestly and competently is acting as a Christian citizen, serving their neighbor

- c. A doctor helping a patient with all of their skill & care is acting as a Christian citizen, serving their neighbor
- d. A lawmaker crafting good zoning or traffic laws to increase human flourishing is acting as a Christian citizen, serving their neighbor

D. Christian citizens are humble, considerate peacemakers

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men... ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. Titus 3:1-2, 8

1. Note that Paul is talking about good works here - just as Peter is in our text
2. He describes a life of obedience and service
3. The character must be humble and considerate - even to those who are arrogant and inconsiderate to us
4. This is the same call as in Jeremiah 29 - work for the shalom of the city of our exile
5. This is particularly important at this point in our culture. Our sound bite, social media culture is given to bombastic, divisive statements that do not serve peace but rather increase strife
 - a. An appeal to not use social media to try and address complex social and political issues
 - b. The wrong tool - like a chainsaw to do surgery - it would only cause further damage and destruction

E. Christian citizens make the prospering of the Gospel their first priority

Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens and strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and **glorify God on the day he visits us.** 1 Peter 2:11–12

1. All of this is built on our new status as believers
2. The Gospel is first in priority in everything we do
3. We also are aware of the coming day of judgment - this must motivate all we do
4. It would be a tragedy on that day to say we “won the culture war” and in the process have driven people away from the Gospel by our conduct

V. Applying the Word

A. Am I following God’s ways - or the worlds?

1. This world thinks this life is all there is
2. It stakes everything on the power play of politics
3. We are to be aliens and strangers to this way of thinking and acting
4. My primary calling is to the kingdom, and then to serving my neighbor in my various callings
5. My primary method is through a godly life that does not give into sin but rather serves others in good works
6. My actions are to be characterized by humility and being considerate of others, and should promote

peace

7. In everything I do, the cause of the Gospel should be primary
8. Does this characterize the way I live each day? Or do I live like this present age is my true home and time?

B. The Table of the Kingdom

1. This Table reminds us of our true status
2. We were cut aliens from God’s Kingdom - but Christ has saved us
3. We are now aliens in this age as we await the return of Christ
4. Come and feast at the Table of the Kingdom

Christian Citizenship

1 Peter 2:11-12
July 17, 2016
Communion
Genesis 12:2-3

Teaching keywords: citizenship; calling and work; character; good works

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:2–3

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