

## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Phil 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;  
NASU

### INTRODUCTION

American Christians enjoy the best of both worlds. We are citizens of the greatest nation on earth, and we are citizens of heaven. But to **enjoy** the best of both worlds, you must **make** the best of both worlds.

As citizens of heaven, we have divine representation before the throne of Almighty God. Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father and the Holy Spirit translates our “groaning” in prayer. We may petition Him at any time, knowing He hears, understands, and communicates our concerns and requests. While our heavenly citizenship is characterized by freedoms that are out of this world, we have the responsibility to *exercise* those liberties within the context of the divine Constitution, which is the Bible.

Similarly, our representative democracy affords us great liberty. But to enjoy these freedoms, we must exercise our civic responsibilities.

We have become quite cynical in our criticism of government and politicians. Verbally degrading our system of government has become a national pastime. It has almost become a national sport, the fodder for comedians and the staple diet for most radio and television talk show programs. We are much more adept at criticism than activism.

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens): “Politics is like the weather – everybody talks about it but no one does anything about it.”

“Christians love to talk about how degenerate society is becoming. They point to immorality in the schools, corruption in the courthouse, crime in the streets. Yet, when an opportunity arises to do something about it, Christians are strangely absent.” (John Eidsmoe, God and Caesar, Christian Faith & Political Action, Crossway, p. 10)

The role of a committed believer and government is always a difficult question. Some are **ACTIVISTS** wanting to endorse candidates and political parties. They want to tell how to vote and for whom we should vote. They sometimes question the spirituality of believers who disagree or don't have the same political passions. On the other hand there are **ISOLATIONISTS**, Christians who shy away from government believing that secular people should run secular government and that any believer who becomes involved in such things is worldly and carnal.

It has been said, perhaps of these individuals, that they are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good. The attitude of some is that Christians should not get wrapped up in matters pertaining to government and issues pertaining to civic citizenship, but that we should exert all our energies and thoughts to our spiritual citizenship. It is true that the apostle Paul says that our citizenship is in heaven.

We become frustrated to the point of thinking, if not saying, “Just let the world go to hell. There is nothing I can do to stop it.” But our other option is to do all we can and trust God to bless our actions.

### GOD COMMANDED HIS PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIL AFFAIRS

Jer. 29:4-7 speaking for God to Jews who had been taken into Babylonian captivity – certainly not friendly kingdom!

“seek the welfare of the city” and “pray to the Lord on its behalf” “for in its welfare you will find your welfare” The word “welfare” is the Hebrew “*shalom*.” This is not grudging resignation, but rather active assistance in building up the community to which they were exiled.

To honor this instruction the Jews would have to participate in as much of the civic affairs of those communities in which they lived as they were permitted. God never sanctioned their escape or revolution against their captors; nor to go “underground”

Daniel & Nehemiah engaged the government in the fulfilling of their work for God

The main point here is that God *commanded* civic participation.

### BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES SUPPORT THE POLITICAL ACTION OF CHRISTIANS

A. Be a light in darkness

Matt 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (NIV)

We are not suggesting that Jesus had political action in mind when He spoke these words, but that is one way in which we may illuminate this dark world.

#### B. Live peaceably

Christians are faced with the challenge of living at peace as citizens of two kingdoms that are at war with each other. Like an ambassador of one country to an enemy country.

Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14

1 Tim. 2:1-4 Pray for kings so that we may lead tranquil quiet (peaceful) life, an environment conducive to evangelism and conversion.

### **CHRISTIANS HAVE HISTORICALLY EXERCISED THE PRIVILEGES OF EARTHLY CITIZENSHIP**

Paul used his Roman citizenship

Acts 16:37-40

37 But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. 39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. (from New International Version)

The apostle Paul escaped beating because of his Roman citizenship (Acts 22). He appealed to Caesar (Acts 25), a benefit as a Roman citizen.

"The Jews had charged Paul with civil 'agitation' (Acts 24:5) and with being a member of a revolutionary group. These were not church matters. The Jewish priests and elders were trespassing civil authority by attempting to execute him (Acts 23:12ff).. But he also challenged any attempt by a civil ruler to limit his spiritual ministry (Acts 16:19-39). Paul makes a significant contribution to the principle that believers have not only a right, but an obligation, to use the powers of persuasion and love to influence civil rulers in favor of Christ and the Scriptures. He did so in the presence of many rulers and civil authorities (see Acts 13:4-12; 16:19-39; 19:23-41; 24:10ff; 25:1-12; 26:1ff; 27:2ff).

### **WAYS IN WHICH WE SHOULD BE ENGAGED**

Rom. 13:5-7 and 1 Tim. 2:1 Obey, Pay, Pray

Promote justice, pay taxes, give thanks

#### **Serve in official capacity!**

Some have carried the concept of sanctification too far. They have the idea that setting their minds on heavenly things (Col. 3:1-10) means that we are to have no concern about this world. Or that we should not risk sullyng our souls by participating in the political process that is so cluttered with corruption.

But John says (1 Jn. 4:20-21) something about loving our brother. Paul (Rom. 13) says civil servants are ministers of God. Jesus told us (Mt. 6) to let our light shine before men. Paul (Gal. 6:10) says we should take every opportunity to do good to all men.

"For the Christian to reason that God does not want him in politics because there are too many evil men in government is as insensitive as for a Christian doctor to turn his back on an epidemic because there are too many germs." (Facing Your Nation, ed., William J. Krutza and Philip P. DiCicco, Baker, pp. 107, 108)

This may mean political office. Nehemiah, Joseph, David

This may mean advising politicians. Esther, Isaiah,

But it definitely means active involvement in government.

VOTE  
PETITION

