**THE BLESSINGS OF DUAL CITIZENSHIP**

I live at the intersection of Church Avenue and State Street. What I mean is, I am a dual citizen. I am an American. I am a Christian.

Dual citizenship has its privileges. Just look at Paul’s life to see its advantages. Paul was able to use his **Jewish citizenship** to enter into synagogues all over the world and preach the gospel of Christ (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 18, 26; 19:8).

*“And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God”* (Acts 19:8).

His upbringing as a Pharisee benefited him greatly in his trial before the Sanhedrin.

*But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!”* (Acts 23:6).

His being educated in the elite school of Rabbi Gamaliel served him well, giving him inside knowledge of the Law of Moses and the traditions of the elders. His pedigree got him into doors shut to others. Remember this?

*“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee*” (Phil. 3:5).

*“Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today”* (Acts 22:1-3).

But he was also able to use his **Roman citizenship** to escape scourging, and appeal to Caesar for trial.

*“Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned*?” (Acts 22:25).

“*So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar*” (Acts 25:10-11).

When the synagogue was shut out to him, he could use his Roman citizenship to great advantage for teaching the gospel to the Gentiles in the School of Tyrannus.

*“But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (Acts 19:9-10).

(Sidenote: Tyrannus means “Tyrant.” He was either a tyrant of a teacher, or he had a school full of tyrants. Either way, that was how I thought of school growing up 😊).

Paul’s dual citizenship as a Jew and Roman opened doors of opportunity for him to serve his Lord in various arenas. This reminds us of his famous quote of, “*To the Jews I became as a Jew … To those without law (Gentiles), as without law … I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (I Cor. 9:19-22).

But it gets even better. Paul was not just a dual citizen, but a tri-citizen. He carried two passports that gave him access throughout the Roman world, and access into Jewish society, but he also owned a passport as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

*“For* ***our citizenship is in heaven****, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”* (Philippians 3:20-21).

Like Paul, I am a dual citizen. First, I’m proud to be an American. That special passport has given me access to many blessings others in the world do not have. For that I am so grateful. I’ll sing Lee Greenwood’s song with you all day long.
“From the lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee, Across the plains of Texas, from sea to shining sea… And I'm proud to be an American, Where at least I know I'm free, And I won't forget the ones who died who gave that right to me, And I'll gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today, Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land, God Bless the USA.

I thank God that American passport has allowed me to travel to many places to share the gospel of Christ (Philippines, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia). If I had lived in many other countries I could not do this.

But I am prouder still to be a citizen of Christ’s kingdom. In fact, I would gladly give up all my blessings and rights as an American to live in any third world country before I would renounce my citizenship in heaven. The longer I live on earth the more homesick I become. I feel like Abraham, *“By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, … for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*” (Hebrews 11:9-10). America has been called “the land of promise” – and surely it has been that to me and my family for generations. But heaven is where I call home, for that is where my earthly father, and my heavenly Father, lives.

Yes, America (and all the world) is going through hard times now. Many of us have lost some or all of our earthly savings. But we who have dual citizenship have been laying up treasures in heaven where no housing bubble, or stock market crash, or pandemic crisis can diminish or devalue our assets. Jesus, our portfolio manager, has guaranteed our return on investment with this iron-clad promise: *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where you treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21).

Today’s lesson. Get on your knees and thank God you live in this country that has printed on its currency, “In God We Trust.” Then rise and say the Pledge of Allegiance that has in it this stanza, “…one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” But above all else give thanks that God has “*blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).

If you are discouraged or depressed, please remember this: “*Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life”* (Matt. 19:29).

Until tomorrow… thank God you are an American. But better yet, a Christian.

I love you.

Rick