

Series Title / The Blessed Life
A study through the letter to the Ephesians
10-21-18 One New Man

Introduction: The genius of Ancient Rome was in its offering of citizenship to worthy subjects. The vast majority of ancient empires did not offer citizenship at any level. People were the property of the state. They were subjects, in some cases slaves, and even among **the wealthy and well-connected** people did not participate in the affairs of their governments. They had no right to determine their individual destinies.

But the genius of Rome is in large part due to its Republic which had elected officials who were a representative body. With the exception of women, every member of the Roman state was expected to fully engage, exercising the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the citizenry. **Of the 50 million people in Rome, only 5 mill. were citizens.**

Most people just had the misfortune of being born into the wrong family, the wrong tribe, the wrong nation.

However, that didn't mean that you couldn't get it. Rome was the first government in history to offer citizenship as a prize for hard work, industry, devotion to Roman ideals, and money. Lots of money. Unlike the Republic in ancient Athens, Rome offered this opportunity even to slaves.

What benefits were there to having citizenship?

- You were expected to **vote**, participate in public and governmental affairs.
- You were entitled to a **fair trial** according to Roman law. The magistrates would hear your case, and as a citizen, if you were found guilty you would not be subject to floggings and beatings, or crucifixion.
- You were allowed to **bribe** a government official, Rome winked at this practice for citizens.
- You were allowed to have a **police investigation** of a crime such as murder. The murder rate in certain quarters of the empire was just as high as it is in many places today, but Rome would actually investigate the case in order to bring justice to your plight.
- You could **travel freely, start businesses, own land or houses**. You could even become a politician and claw your way to prominence.
- You could sign up for a Sophist academy, **pay your tuition** and become a philosopher.
- You could **legally own a brothel**, which was very lucrative in Rome, especially in Port cities like Pompeii, Ephesus, or Corinth.

As a citizen of the greatest, most power Republic in the history of the world, you were not only free-you were free to maximize, to fully realize your citizen liberties as you worked to bring glory, honor, and praise to your family name. Proving to all that you were not a foreigner, a non-citizen, a provincial who had no rights, no responsibilities, and no privileges. As a citizen you beam proudly with your family name, being built on the foundation of your illustrious and honored ancestors.

The Main Text: Eph. 2:19-22

So then you (**Gentile believers**) are no longer **foreigners and noncitizens**, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and **members of God's household**, 20 because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The Main Idea: We must begin to reorient our thinking to our new identity in Christ.

So then...

- **you are citizens (2:19)**

As citizens of his Kingdom we have certain rights and responsibilities that pertain to our life in the Kingdom.

Illus. What is an American citizen entitled to? Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. What is the basis of this right? They are **God ordained**—God has bestowed them on humanity. That is, God is the one who sets the terms, he himself determines what in his creation has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

But what supplies us with the guarantee of these rights in the Bill of Rights is our citizenship. Citizens have a right to petition and protest their government, the right to assemble, the right to free speech and to bear arms and to vote and all the rest. And God, in the Kingdom, has Sovereignly determined the rights, privileges and responsibilities of his citizenry...

There are two attitudes to avoid when approaching the subject of our rights and privileges in the Kingdom. (1) is an arrogant presumption, or pride of achievement; (2) false humility. avoiding this subject matter altogether.

- **you are members (2:19b):** οἰκεῖος is the word here, comes from the word *oikos* which means “house.” The *oikeioi* are the kinsman, the family members of the *oikos*, the household. **In Paul’s mixing of metaphors here, our citizenship is based on our sonship...**

The blood of the Messiah—he is the inheritor who fulfills God’s covenants with Abraham, Moses and David.

Jesus’ blood is the atonement for our sins on a cross. So, by faith in his shed blood, we are invited to participate in the bloodline of the Messiah—the true Son and heir of God’s Kingdom. **Which brings us to the first privilege...**

- **Right #1: sonship.** John said this about Jesus in Jn. 1:12, “**But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children.**” The word right here is the same word used in Roman contexts for “entitled.” **As a believer, you and I are entitled to call on God the Father as our Father who art in Heaven. We have the right and privilege to name Christ as our Savior and Lord and to come boldly before his throne, humbly before his Word, and persistently in prayer with the full expectation that we will be heard by the one true God and Sovereign Lord of Creation.**

Responsibility: represent the family. Paul says in Rom. 12:2, “**Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.**” If you’ve ever wanted to know God’s will for your life, here it is. Renew your mind in his Word. Gal. 4: “**My children—I am again undergoing birth pains until Christ is formed in you!**” As those who’ve been given the right to be made children of God—we are to be conformed in our lives to the image of his only Son. To become more like Him day-by-day.

- **Right #2: forgiveness.** You have the “right” to be forgiven if you confess in earnest your sins. 1 Jn. 1:7-10 “**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**” **In the minute before you confess and are saved, you are as lost as a man can be. In the one hot second after you confess your sins to Jesus, your faith in Him as Savior and God over all, you are as forgiven as you will ever be. He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse of all unrighteousness.**

Responsibility: to ask for forgiveness and extend forgiveness to all. Jesus said, in Mt. 6:12, 14 “**And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**” **Pharisees:** They are in a state of constant judgment of other people. They are hiding sin, unconfessed, unaware of the scope and depth of their own depravity.

- **Right #3: suffering and persecution.** We can't forget this one now. Bearing the sufferings of Jesus is the great privilege, in this life, of all who are citizens and forgiven sons. **Acts 5:40-41** "and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ **Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.**" You have been given the right and the privilege to identify with sufferings and the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth. Having been adopted by faith into God's family in Jesus, you are now a participant in the sufferings of Christ, carrying the cross of Christ, and bearing the testimony of Christ.

Responsibility: carry the cross. The cross is an emblem of suffering and shame.

Lk. 14:27, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." A stigma is forever associated with it. For the Romans it was the **stigma of indignity, dishonor—public shame.** Rome not only killed murders, thieves, revolutionaries on the cross—

it was their way of **erasing the memory** of you from the face the earth. **No one ever remembers a crucified man.** And the reason why you need to be remembered, according to pagans, was to keep you alive in the afterlife. To keep you from passing into Hades from Paradise. As long as the memory of you lived on, as long as your living relatives continued to light the incense, pray to your statue, and honor you in this life—then you would live in the afterlife. And you could bring your living family fortune. And Jesus says in Welcome to the Kingdom of our God and Lord, Jesus. Its citizens are **cross-bearers.**

- **Right #4: freedom from the power of sin.** Paul tells us that we are no longer to be **subjugated to the reign** of sin in our lives. We need to avoid two extremes here: thinking we can be totally free from the presence and temptation of sin; and thinking that we are hopelessly in the grip of sin with no ability to live in conformity to God's Word. Paul solves this with a balanced approach in Rom. 6-8. **6:1 presupposes that Paul has already made a vigorous case for salvation by Grace through faith alone (Rom. ch's 1-5). "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means!"**

- **Rom. 6:6-7** "We know that our old nature was crucified with Christ so that the sinful body would no longer overwhelm and enslave us, so that we would no longer be subjugated to sinful patterns. ⁷ (For someone who has died has been released from sin's reign.)" Paul's entire line of thought in Chapter 6 of Romans is that we are not to live subjugated to the yoke of slavery to sin any longer. **Paul's standard for the Christian life followed by the Grammatical Imperatives like a drum beat.**
- **Rom. 7:22-23** "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." The picture he paints in ch. 7 is not of the best possible Christian life, but of the endless tension between the sinful flesh and all its evil desires, and the heart that longs to follow and obey God's Word.
- **Rom. 8:9-10** "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Responsibility: train yourselves to be godly, as Paul told Timothy. **1 Tim. 4:6-8** "⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

2 Tim. 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for **training** in righteousness;" Allow the grace that you've been saved by to also "train you by grace" as Paul told Titus.

But sin is no longer to have a mastery over your life. You are emancipated from its reign in your heart and mind, and as a new creation in Christ Jesus you are to live free.

- **Right #5: freedom from fear.** Paul tells Timothy 2 Tim. 1:7 “For God did not give us a Spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.” The false gods of pagan religion engendered fear. It was the fear that they would misstep, zig when they should have zagged, that their sacrifices and offerings and obedience to these tyrannical gods would not be accepted which would bring swift judgment in real time, a flood, an earthquake, a pestilence, famine and starvation. Ancient pagans didn’t serve and worship their false idols out of love and devotion—empowered by that deity out of his abundance of mercy and kindness for them. They served out of terror for that celestial tyrant. Paul says, “Not so with you. God didn’t give you a Spirit of terror, of fear—he gave you his grace, his mercy, showed you the full extent of his loving-kindness—and out of that great love and grace for you are to live empowered by the Spirit, basking in the love of God Almighty, and living with a stable, secure mind. Legalistic cults can never achieve this. They always operate off of fear. But you can know that God has got you. The thing which strikes fear in your heart has already been defeated. You need not fear calamity, even if calamity should befall you. You need not fear misfortune, even if your earthly life should take a turn for the worst. You need not fear death—because you are promised in him a body of immortality, incorruptibility, you will be for eternity in the direct and immediate manifest presence of the only true God.

Responsibility: boldly stand for the Gospel of Christ. Here’s the rest of that Timothy passage 2: Tim. 1:8 “So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, a prisoner for his sake, but by God’s power accept your share of suffering for the gospel”

So what have you to fear. You are a citizen of God’s eternal Kingdom. You are patriot of that world, an expatriate of this world.

Gentile Christians, Paul says, you have been included in people of God—having received all the rights, responsibilities and privileges of citizenship: sonship, forgiveness, bearing the cross, freedom from sin’s power, freedom from fear.

- **you are living stones Eph. 2:20-22** “because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Right #6: holy community.

Let’s talk briefly about our foundation. There are three elements here in this new, spiritual house of God.

Cornerstone—the foundation stone which determines the square.



The stone is about the size of a train railcar. The foundation stone determines the quality of the rest of the building. How level, how straight, how solid.

We are living temple built on the cornerstone—Christ himself. The foundation stones laid upon it are the

- Apostles: those original eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.
- Prophets: those inspired spokesmen-women who, along with the Apostles, interpreted and explained the meaning and importance of Christ’s life.

We are a community built on this sure foundation. We are the citizens of heaven’s Kingdom, the members of God’s holy family in Christ, the temple, the city, the dwelling place of our God.

Enjoying all the privileges of citizenship in God’s Kingdom.

Charged with exercising the responsibilities toward our fellow man.

Built up, stone by stone, as the holy temple of our God.