

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:25

We are a nation of immigrants as over the years people of all nationalities have come together, leaving behind their native cultures and societies and adopting a new culture in order to build a strong nation and a better life. Today the value of citizenship in our nation is slowly being eroded as increasing numbers of foreigners enter this country, who, for the most part, are not actually interested in adopting our culture, language, or values but are primarily interested in reaping the economic benefits that can be found here. Predominantly, they are not planning to stay and build a life here to strengthen this nation, but are only here temporarily until they gather up enough money to return to the land of their nativity. Some even apply for citizenship here, but primarily for the economic benefit it will be for them and not because they value and delight in this nation. Few of them renounce their citizenship in the land of their birth but hold on to it out of devotion and become citizens here only for convenience. Thus, they become a people with a dual citizenship, one in the land of their birth which they love and the other in a land of strange customs for which they have no allegiance except economic advantage.

This situation is in stark contrast to the citizenship of the people of GOD. The LORD has a chosen people which HE has loved before the foundation of the world. (see Eph.1:4,5) They are the objects of HIS love and the reason that JESUS CHRIST came into the world as the REDEEMER. (see Mat.1:21) It is GOD's purpose to call them out of this world and to fit them for that world to come, though they are born into this world just like everyone else. And just like everyone else they have inherited the sinful nature of their father Adam. (see Eph.2:3) As natural born sons of Adam they are under the same curse and condemnation as all other sons of Adam's race. (see John 3:18) For just like every son of Adam they have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD. They are every one worthy of death and have no reason in themselves to expect any thing other than the just wrath of a holy GOD. If GOD should leave them alone they would all surely perish and receive the just recompense of their sin.

But GOD who is rich in mercy and full of grace has extended HIS mighty arm of salvation to them and rescued them from certain doom. HE sent HIS only begotten SON into the world to pay their sin debt and to buy them from the slavery into which they gladly sold themselves. In time HE awakens them out of the slumber of spiritual death which has passed upon all men (see Rom.5:12) and causes them to hear the glorious sound of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST which informs them of the work which CHRIST has done in their behalf and acquaints them with the glories of HIS person. They believe and trust in this ONE who has purchased their pardon and caused them to pass from death unto life. GOD in mercy takes up residence in them in the person of the HOLY SPIRIT and transforms them from the old to a new creature.

They don't suddenly cease to have the old nature which they received at their natural birth but now there is a new creation formed in the same body where the old nature ruled without rival.

Thus begins an epic struggle for supremacy. Paul writes about this struggle in the seventh chapter of Romans and again in Galatians 5:17 where he says, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* He identifies the warring parties as the old man and the new man in Eph 4:22-24, *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”*

So the LORD's people who have been regenerated by the HOLY GHOST have now been given citizenship in a country which they could not enter by natural birth. Though they are still living in the country of their nativity, they have renounced that citizenship, preferring to be called the sons of GOD and to dwell in that place to which HE has called them by HIS grace. The old man still haunts them and is quite actively seeking to maintain the grip that he has held them with their whole life. His primary purpose is to thwart their attempts to prepare themselves for the land of their new citizenship. He still occasionally causes them to stumble and is always nipping at their heels and casting aspersions upon this new country which now holds their allegiance. But they are given a resolve by the ONE who called them and who presently upholds them by HIS mighty power to press on to that heavenly land. By the grace of GOD they have:

Renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. (see II Cor.4:2) *They desire to know the truth which the LORD has promised would set them free. They are uninterested in the fables and superstitions of religion. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24)*

Turned from idols. (see I Thes.1:9) There is but one KING for the citizens of that new country. They owe no allegiance to any creeds, nations, or law except CHRIST. *“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” (Romans 8:12)*

Confessed that they are strangers and pilgrims in this world. (see Heb.11:13) This world has nothing to offer us. We cannot but be hindered on our journey to the celestial city by the things which this world sets forth before us. As Isaac Watts said, *“Is this vile world a friend to grace to lead us on to GOD?” “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” (Heb 12:1-2)*

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