

Citizenship in Heaven

by George Kulp

George Kulp's sermon emphasizes the significance of our heavenly citizenship and its implications for our lives on earth.

Scripture: Psalm 87:5, John 14:2, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:13, Ephesians 2:19, Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 12:22, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Heavenly Citizenship", "Theocratic Government"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the heavenly citizenship of believers, drawing parallels from historical accounts of citizens being protected and freed due to their citizenship. He emphasizes the eternal citizenship in heaven that believers possess, transcending earthly powers and limitations. Kulp highlights the vast territory and capital of the Commonwealth of God, where saints of all ages are fellow citizens, united in Christ. He underscores the theocratic government of God, governed by divine law and characterized by love, holiness, and unity among believers.

Transcript

Phil. 3:20 -- "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Eph. 2:19 -- "Fellow citizens with the saints."

A little man, so we are told, stands in the presence of the representatives of the greatest political power on earth at that time. He is afflicted in his body; his friends are absent; they have stripped him for the lash, when he asserts himself, and asks, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and he uncondemned?" When the Centurion hears this he goes to the Chief Captain, and says, "This man is a Roman; better be careful what you do." At once the Captain is much interested and he goes to the prisoner and asks him, "Art thou a Roman?" And I can see that little man straighten himself up, and, looking his questioner in the eye, he replies, "I am." The Captain says, "With a great price obtained I this freedom." But the prisoner shouts it out, "I was free born," and as a freeman he goes forth after receiving due apologies.

An Englishman was taken captive by Theodore of Abyssinia, and after a few months' imprisonment he managed in some way to get word to England that he was detained a prisoner in the Capitol of Abyssinia, by Theodore the King. Immediately the British Empire was at work -- a work that meant business. Ships were summoned, an army was at once gathered, and under the command of Lord Wollesly they set out for

Abyssinia. Arriving in due time, they marched towards the Capital and demanded the surrender at once of the captive Englishman, and he was freed, because he was a citizen of England.

An Austrian came to the United States. In due time he took out his papers and became a full-fledged American citizen. After some years he went back to Austria, and was apprehended by the authorities, and put into prison for evading military duty. He pleaded that he owed none; that he was an American citizen. He got word to the American Consul that he was detained, and the Consul demanded that he be set at liberty. When the Austrian Government was aware the Consul had taken the case in hand, it sent the prisoner on board an Austrian man-of-war in the harbor. The American Consul at once sent word to Captain Ingraham, commanding an American sloop of war in the harbor, that an American citizen was unlawfully detained, in spite of his demand, and was on the Austrian man-of-war in the harbor. Captain Ingraham at once cleared his decks for action, and sent word to the Commander of the Austrian man-of-war, "Put that American on my decks by one o'clock, or I will blow you out of the water." At one o'clock he was there, all because he was an American citizen; because he could say, "I am an American."

But here is something greater by far: Here is a man who is held by the powers that be; he is in durance vile; a prisoner in the Roman prison, but he knows that freedom is not far of'. He is writing to the Church, he looks down through the ages; he takes in all the children of God in all the years to come. He yokes himself up with them all. He looks beyond prisons, and earthly powers, beyond shipwrecks to which he had been no stranger, and stripes, and he says, aye, I think he stopped and praised God for awhile, as he wrote it, "our citizenship is in heaven." And that is not all. It is not mere emotion, a mere stirring of the feelings, but it stays with him. He is writing to the Ephesian Church, and he says it again, "We are fellow citizens with the saints" -- saints of all ages. That takes us in you and me down here in the Twentieth Century -- "our citizenship is in heaven," We are "fellow citizens with the saints."

I like to read after Paul. There is a place where he talks about the commonwealth of Israel. He says that once we "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... and came and preached peace to you which were afar off. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone ... in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

This Commonwealth to which Paul and you and I belong, is no fancy picture. It is real, as real as the place where you live. It has territory, the Universe. It has a Capital, a King, Chief Magistrate, Citizens, and future destiny.

Let me call your attention to the territory. It takes in all the universe as God Himself knows it. It is all ours. As citizens it belongs to us. I can prove it by the Word, and so can you if you will take time to look it up. When I was a boy I lived in Philadelphia, my native city. Once a year my father would take me to Trenton, N. J., for a visit with his folks who lived there. It was the event of my boyhood days -- to go on the boat up the Delaware River, on the steamer Edwin Forrest, to Trenton. I would talk about it before I started, and for weeks after I got back. It was a big thing to that boy. Since then I have been from the Atlantic to the Pacific States, I have traveled and preached from the plains of Texas to the snows of Ontario. And the United States looks small to me. My vision has so enlarged. I am told that it is twenty-five thousand miles around

the earth, and I take it for granted it is so, but it is too small for me. I am headed, as a citizen of heaven, for bigger things. Some of these days I am going to travel as fast as light can travel, one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles a second, and I am going to explore the territory of our God; for it is all yours and mine. I am going to Saturn and Jupiter; take a small journey to Uranus, then along the Milky Way to the Pleiades; go all the millions and millions of miles through space, and look on the works of Him who made all things by His Word. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." I am going to listen to the music of the spheres, for the planets "go singing as they shine, the hand that made us is divine. "Wheresoever in His rich creation Sweet music breathes, in wave or bird or soul, 'Tis but the faint and far reverberation Of that great tune to which the planets roll."

By the good grace of God some day then, in the eternal day of God in which we will live, I am going to explore the City of our God, the Capital City of the Universe. I was in Washington, the Capital of the United States. Having some time on my hands, I took a ride in a sight-seeing auto, With a guide who told us all about the various places as we passed them. He said, "This is the Capitol Building. It took so many years to build it, cost so much money. The Senate and the House of Representatives do business, make laws for you and me to keep.

This is the White House where the President lives. When he is in Washington, the flag is always over the building. When he is absent, the flag is lowered. When Congress is in session, the flag is always over the Capitol. Now we are in the Dupont Circle. There is more wealth represented here than in any place on the globe. Here, we are now looking at the home of the late President Woodrow Wilson. Yonder is the Smithsonian Institute. That tall shaft is the Washington Monument, and there is the old Ford Theater where Abraham Lincoln Was assassinated.

Just across the street is the house in which he died." And then I remember, to prove that Washington was the richest place in all the world, he said, "Why, the leaves on the trees all have greenbacks, and the birds all have bills, and even the horses have checks." Then we went over to Arlington, the city of the dead, where lie many boys who laid down their lives during the Civil war. There I saw the grave and monument of my old commanders, Philip Sheridan and General Wright.

But one of these days when the saints are all home, I am going to have an angel, one of those appointed to minister to the heirs of salvation, take me through the City and point out to me all the places of interest. I expect to ride along the boulevards of the City and have him tell me, "There is the mansion of Abraham, the man who took God at His Word and asked no questions. There is the home of Daniel, who slept all night though lions growled, and enemies were wishing for his death.

Yonder is the home. of the Hebrew children, the boys who would not bow the knee to the golden image. That tall home there is where John Wesley lives, though he is seldom home, as he still keeps on the go, looking around and talking to the redeemed he won for God, and talking over the victories God gave them through grace down there where you once lived. In that row over there that is so resplendent with the glory of God is where the martyrs live, and yonder is the home of Calvin, not far from where John Knox, that great man of prayer, lives."

And then I expect he will take me to the home of some saint I never heard tell of down here, and he will tell me as I look on the beautiful Home in which they now live, "Their names were never in the papers; the folks did not know much about them. They never wrote reports, but God knew them. They were doing His will so quietly, and so effectively. They lived in basements and on back streets, down there, but God had

them always in mind, and up here all heaven knows them. When they came the angels were looking for them and sang their welcome home."

I expect to find a wonderful City there. The Lamb is the light of the place. He is the temple. There are no graveyards on the hillsides. The river of life flows through the City, and the tree of life is easy of access to all the saints. Their employment is doing the will of God even as do the angels.

The Head of the Commonwealth is God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has all the qualifications that are necessary for a King. Washington was the Father of his country worthy of much honor, but he was an aristocrat, the richest man of his day. Lincoln was the typical American. He was the grandest Man that ever filled the chair at Washington. He was wise, patient, humble, had the vision as no other man of his day had, but something he lacked. Woodrow Wilson was a great president. He had the courage of his convictions. Men failed to understand him, but he kept right on. And today we are seeing that he was right, but he lacked some things. But our God, the Head of the Government, is lacking in nothing. He is omniscient, He sees all things, knows all things; His eyes are ever upon His children. He is omnipresent, ever with them, right alongside, when He is needed. He discerns all needs and supplies all necessities. He is omnipotent, has all power, and it is at the disposal of His children as they look to Him. He said once, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And He said to His children, "Ye shall have power above all the power of the enemy." His infinite goodness desires only the happiness of His elect, and His boundless love is ever manifested.

The government is administered by the Son, and He has all the qualifications needed. He is Divine and Human: He is both God and Man, He is the God-Man, He is the Man Job prayed for when he cried, "Oh, for a daysman who may lay hands upon us both." Jesus Christ in His Deity laid hold of 'God, in His Humanity He laid hold of man and made them at-one. He is the Mediator, and "ever lives above for us to intercede, His all redeeming love, His precious blood to plead, His blood atoned for all the race, and sprinkles now the throne of grace."

The Holy Spirit is the Agent. He represents the Father and the Son; makes us to know our rights; bears witness to our citizenship; acquaints us with our privileges; tells us that the handwriting of ordinances that was against us is now taken out of the way. There is peace through the blood. Minding Him we have victory; and all that are spiritually-minded mind Him. Citizens are all holy beings. Without holiness it is impossible to please Him, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all who have repented of their sins, and have accepted of Jesus Christ as their Savior from all sin. Here, character is the basis of citizenship -- not rank, not money, not birth, not reputation, but character -- what you ARE in His sight.

The Government is a theocracy. God is the King and this is God's ideal of Government. When Israel demanded a king and Samuel went down on his face and wept, God said to him, "Get up from off thy face. They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected ME." We talk about making the world safe for democracy, and boast of our republican form of government, but God's plan as shown in His dealings with His chosen people was a theocracy. He will be King, or nothing; He will be all, or not at all. The Psalmist said, "Thou art My Sun, my Shield, My exceeding great Reward." To whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are.

The Government is a government of law, and this law we find recorded in His Word. Dr. Elliott tells me of a five foot bookshelf that is the thing that should be in every home. With all due respect to the late President

of Harvard, I beg leave to say that long before he thought of his books which he commended so highly, God gave us sixty-six books, all of them only two inches, and they are ahead of anything and all the books the doctor ever commended to the American people. Obey the law and live. Disobey and die! Aye, Jesus summed it up in the Scripture, "Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And then just before He 'went up to be at home forever He gave a new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." This is the commandment, this is the law, just love. He left us an Example that we should walk in His footsteps, and love as He loved, even unto death.

The mutual relationship is worthy of our notice: The citizens are all one in Christ. Under the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, but ye are all one in Christ Jesus -- not Jew, not Gentile, but just one. This does away with the color line, the bread line; there will be none when the church lives the Book. There will be no distinctions such as man makes now. "One army of the living God before His throne we bow, Part of the host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now." George Whitefield, while preaching, one time, in Philadelphia, cried aloud, ".Gabriel, have you any Methodists in heaven?" And back comes the answer, "None." "Any Presbyterians in heaven?" "None." "Any Baptists in heaven?" "None." "Gabriel, who have you there?" "All who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Baptists in hell, Methodists in hell, Presbyterians in hell, but no sectarian lines in heaven -- all one in Christ Jesus. Perfect freedom in that city. Each one does exactly as he pleases, and pleases only to do the will of the king. His folks here are the same, peculiar, unworldly, seeking only to know the will of God and to do it.

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