

Immigrants, Citizenship, and Excitement

Like the Apostle Paul in **Acts 22:28**, I am a citizen of my country by birth. The Roman Tribune to whom he spoke had bought his citizenship. Millions have come to America over our years to obtain citizenship in our land. Perhaps you have attended or watched our new citizens inducted into America with their oath of allegiance.¹ That oath includes:

1. Renunciation of allegiance to former countries;
2. The support and defense of the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
3. Bearing true faith and allegiance to the same;
4. Bearing arms on behalf of the United States when required by law;
5. Performing noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law;
6. Performing work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law;
7. Taking this oath freely, without reservation and without any purpose of evasion

When these new citizens take their oath of allegiance, there is no shame or embarrassment. There is pride and excitement. No one is disrespectfully kneeling at the National Anthem. No one is covering their head in their shirt. There is celebration! People have often left modern tyranny and oppression to become part of the greatest nation in the history of the world. Here is freedom and the opportunity to become all we can be under God.

When Irving Berlin was five years old, he and his parents emigrated from a poor Russian Jewish ghetto and settled in the Lower East Side of NYC. Irving loved America and the opportunities he had here. He became a prominent songwriter.

In 1918, Berlin wrote, “**God Bless America.**” He revised it in 1938 as the Nazis began threatening all of Europe. Kate Smith sang the revision on her radio broadcast on Armistice Day that year. It became an immediate success, an “unofficial anthem of the US.”² Notice some of the Lyrics:

**God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above**

**From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home**

Irving Berlin and millions of immigrants have loved America. People all over the earth look to us because God really did shed His grace on us. How about us, dear patriots? What is our love for God’s gift of America?

It is harder for us, who have been born into citizenship, to appreciate America as those who are new. The enthusiasm and gratitude of new citizens help us appreciate what we have been given – by God and the sacrifice of Patriots through the years.

¹ [USA Citizenship Oath - US Immigration Blog \(us-immigration.com\)](http://us-immigration.com)

² Dr. Richard G. Lee, Gen. Ed. American Patriot’s Bible (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2009), p. 211.

This all kind of reminds me of our relationship with Jesus. New disciples act differently than the old ones. Do you remember how you felt when you discovered the “treasure hidden in the field” and that “pearl of great price” which Jesus described in **Matthew 13**? Now that time has passed, have you cooled off in your enthusiasm? Have you become a cynical critic rather than an excited servant?

As American disciples of Jesus we need to remember what we have when “God shed His grace” on us. We attained freedom in Him as we followed. We experience freedom in our country, again by God’s grace and the sacrifices of patriots. Maybe the words to the church in Ephesus in **Revelation 2:4-5** fit here on two levels:

⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

No, America is not the new Israel or the actual kingdom of God on earth. Yet, it has been a blessed nation for which we can be grateful.

Keep the Light of God’s Blessing on America Burning!