

True Freedom – July 1, 2018

This is the weekend that we celebrate the 4th of July here at Mt. Olive. Independence Day is the day that we as a country celebrate the fact that we are free. Freedom is such a great blessing, but unless you've been a slave, or you've been in jail, you'll probably never really know just how great it is to be free. What do you think is the biggest symbol of freedom in our country? Some might say the Statue of Liberty, standing in New York, welcoming all those who come to our country looking for freedom. Or maybe the bald eagle, soaring freely in the sky? Or maybe the biggest symbol of freedom is the flag. Maybe you have one in your front yard today.

Of all the people in the world, what group of people enjoy the greatest amount of freedom? Strangely, the answer is not Americans. Of all the people in the world, the people who enjoy the greatest amount of freedom are Christians. Did you know that? Christians are the free-est people in the world. Many people would say that Christians aren't free – they're bound by all kinds of rules to live by. But that's not true. Christians are free. In fact, a Christian living in communist China enjoys more freedom than an unbeliever living in America.

THE MEANING OF THE COLORS IN THE FLAG – spoken by the flag. My red stands for the blood that was shed for the freedom I represent. Yet, my red originated from the blood of Jesus who died and rose again for those who believe in Him and for whom the Pilgrims came to this country for religious freedom and for the freedom from tyrants who would not let them worship God except in a national denominational church.

My people are now free to worship in the church of their choice, whether it be Lutheran, Non-denominational, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical Free, Episcopalian, Catholic, or other denominations who believe in the One True God of the Bible. People here are even free to disbelieve or to doubt. All we ask in America is that the ones who do not believe in Jesus will not try to use the freedoms we give them to try to take away the freedoms of those of us who do believe in Jesus.

My blue stands for heaven, the eternal dwelling place of those who go to be with the eternal, everlasting Father who created us. My blue reminds me that those who want to go to heaven must believe and put their trust and belief in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Obedience to the written message that God gave to them in His Holy Book, the Bible is the proof of my people's faith in God.

My white reminds me that my motives must always remain pure, unselfish, without greed, & with arms outstretched to welcome all who long for freedom, justice, opportunity and equality under the law. My white reminds me that because I am the symbol of a Christian nation founded upon Christian principles and the law of God represented by God's Ten Commandments that I am only pure and righteous because I was washed white in the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and Savior of all who trust in Him.

That statement shows the close relationship between the freedoms we enjoy as Americans with the true freedom we have spiritually because of the sacrifice of Jesus, God's Son and our Savior. Let's take a look at the first part of what I think is one of the most powerful chapters in Scripture: Rom 8. In this chapter Paul writes about the freedom from sin that one finds in Christ.

To appreciate more fully the blessings we have in Christ, consider that there is first, freedom from the condemnation of sin.

Everyone is guilty of sin – "...all have sinned and fall short" (3:23)

Even if one committed just one sin – "whoever keeps the law but fails in one point" (Ja 2:10)

Unforgiven sin separates us from God – the ultimate condemnation is death

But, there is freedom from condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1)

For in Christ Jesus there is redemption & justification – "...are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." (3:24)

For in baptism there is death to sin, newness of life – "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

But, there is more! There is also freedom from the power of sin.

The problem of sin is not limited to guilt, as if guilt of sin isn't bad enough!

Sin also has power to enslave a person so they can't do what they want to do!

“,,everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:34). The freedom under consideration is freedom from the slavery of sin! "So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn 8:36).

Therefore there is now freedom to live according to the Spirit, not the flesh (Ro. 8:5-8)

Setting their minds on things of the Spirit, not things of the flesh.

Whereby we can enjoy life and peace, not death.

The symbol of Christian freedom is the cross of Christ.

The **Christian Flag** is a flag designed in the early 20th century to represent all of Christianity. The flag has a white field, with a red Latin cross inside a blue canton. The shade of red on the cross symbolizes the blood Jesus shed on Calvary. The blue represents the waters of baptism as well as the faithfulness of Jesus. The white represents Jesus' purity.

Today, we see flags all over our community, symbols of freedom. True freedom comes from the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Without it there would be no reason to believe in Jesus or celebrate our freedom. For I believe that if the cross did not happen, then there wouldn't have been a 4th of July that declared our Declaration of Independence. And as our nation will celebrate our freedom in a couple of days, I pray today, as every day, that you and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ will celebrate our freedom from the bondage of sin.

God bless you, believer! God bless America! In Jesus. Amen.