

Celebrating Our Freedom in Christ

Intro: It's the Fourth of July weekend; and in typical fashion, we see the manifestations of celebration and patriotism all around us. We see flag displays, cookouts, and fireworks displays—all expressing celebration for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans.

Today it might be appropriate to remember that we, as Christians, also have a freedom to celebrate. In fact, the message of freedom rings throughout the NT. Listen to some of those verses:

Jesus in the synagogue read from the prophet Isaiah declaring:

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” (Luke 4:18–19, NASB)

And during his ministry he announced to his hearers:

“Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31–32, NASB)

After Jesus' resurrection the apostles continue to declare the message of freedom. Paul declared to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia:

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.” (Acts 13:38–39, NASB)

Later he wrote to the Christians in Galatia:

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1, NASB)

All of this certainly makes clear that “freedom” was an important theme of the gospel. But what is that freedom? How was it made possible? What privileges and duties does it call forth?

Satan took our freedom away!

To speak of freedom is to imply a condition of slavery or servitude. And the Scripture remind us that Satan took our freedom away and made us slaves of sin.

Jesus' Jewish listeners were troubled by Jesus' statement that the truth would make them free. They protested:

We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You shall become free’?

But Jesus showed them that there was a slavery to which all people are susceptible:

Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. (John 8:33–34)

Jesus shows us that sin is a master that enslaves and holds us the power of bondage.

But sin is not only a master that slaves; it is a judge that condemns.

Sin condemns us as criminals against the law of the universe and sentences us to eternal death! It is a lifelong condition from which we cannot on our own power extract ourselves.

Paul's description of the man under law reveals the hopeless despair of being unable to remedy our own slavery to sin:

“For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:22–24, NASB)

Is there hope for a sinner to be “free”?

God makes freedom possible through the sacrifice of His Son and the work of His Spirit.

We are made free by the sacrifice of Christ.

Earlier we spoke about how sin not only enslaves, but also condemns. What if someone could bear the penalty or sentence that we deserve and release us from it?

That is in fact what Jesus did for us. He bore the penalty for our sin that we might be set free from it.

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:3–4, NASB)

Instead of like us being condemned by sin, Jesus condemned sin. He escaped the condemnation of the Law by obeying perfectly without sin; and he condemned sin to death by the offering of Himself as a sacrifice to atone for it.

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” (Hebrews 2:14–15)

What a great blessing the Lord has provided for us through the death of His Son.

By Christ's sacrifice we can be freed from sin's power by being released from the Law which condemns:

“For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our

body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:5–6, NASB)

By Christ’s sacrifice we can be freed from sin’s condemnation through the payment of sin’s penalty. There remain no grounds of condemnation for those who believe in and stay with Jesus.

“THERE is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1, NASB)

We are made free by the work of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus left earth, having given His life as a sacrifice to set us free, He sent the Holy Spirit to reveal the way of redemption.

Through the apostles He revealed the good news of redemption.

We no longer have to live like criminals in prison awaiting the death sentence; but instead we can leave the rule of sin and come under the rule of the Spirit.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” (Romans 8:2, NASB)

Thus we can say:

“By Him we live.” (Gal. 5:25).

Through the apostles He shows us the path to righteousness.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

(Romans 8:12–14, NASB)

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;” (Ephesians 3:16, NASB)

He bears fruit in us putting to death the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:22).

And what comes forth from us the love, joy, peace, patience, etc. that God calls “the fruit of the Spirit.”

Like Jesus He reveals the truth that sets us free.

He testifies that we are God’s children.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” (Romans 8:16, NASB)

He helps our weaknesses in prayer

“And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26–27, NASB)

In view of this we can understand why Paul said:

“But where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Our freedom in Christ obligates us to a different life.

Our freedom is not a freedom to sin, but a freedom to pursue righteousness.

Many NT hearers of the gospel were concerned that Paul’s teaching of release from the Law as a means of righteousness would produce a life of sin. Instead Paul showed that true redemption from sin actually makes us “servants of righteousness.”

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17–18, NASB)

“All things are lawful” is not a right to live by the flesh in fornication or use our bodies in sin (1 Cor. 6:12-20).

And we must beware of the false teacher who may use appeals to freedom to advocate a way of contrary to the teaching of the Master:

“For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” (2 Peter 2:18–19, NASB)

If we think about the word “patriotic,” it suggests a loyalty to our “patria” or country. It is to value what our heavenly father values; and to remember that we are citizens of a heavenly city.

Our freedom is not freedom live selfishly, but rather it is a freedom to serve others in love.

Our freedom is not freedom to do as we please, but freedom to do as we ought.

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13, NASB)

Our freedom is not freedom to destroy the freedom of others; but it is the freedom to forego our liberty for the sake of others.

“But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Corinthians 8:9, NASB)

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.” (1 Corinthians 9:19, NASB)

You know you are truly free when you can surrender your freedom for the sake of the well-being of another person.

Conclusion: Today we can cherish the freedom we have as Americans. We need to think about the obligations to protect and preserve that freedom. And we need think of the great sacrifices that have been made to make our freedom possible and to keep us free.

Often at the graveside of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, the words are quoted: “Greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends.”

As we hear those words, we need to remember that the sacrifices men make are modeled after but can never match up to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Because of what He did for us, there is an even greater freedom possible for us. You too can have this freedom in Christ. If you’re tired of sin, of being under the dominion of superstition, of lust, of anger, of drink or drugs, there is one and only one hope for you. Jesus will set you free. Mt. 11:28-30