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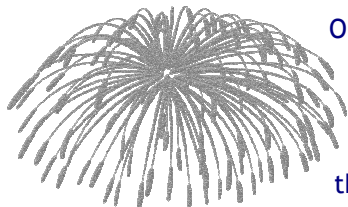
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What Does Freedom Mean to You?

James 4:12: (NASB) *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?*



Once again we approach another anniversary of our country's freedom. There will be fireworks, picnics, cookouts, family and friends. There will be volleyball, baseball, swimming and sandy beaches. All of these are as a result of the freedom we experience by living where we live. Freedom - because we have it, we can easily take it for granted. What is freedom and what does it mean to you? Stay with us as we look for the answer to that question through history, through the Bible and through your eyes...

Do we trust in God?

David, as an example of trust: 2 Samuel 22:1-7



Introduction, Declaration of Independence, John Adams (TV miniseries, 2008)

- ...Resolution that these colonies are, and of a right ought to be, free and independent states and that all political connection between them and the country of Great Britain is, and of a right ought to be, totally dissolved.

In early America, a trust in God was tangible. It could be felt, it could be seen and it therefore could be emulated. Their cause was that of freedom - freedom to live, worship and thrive, without the heavy hand of tyranny beating them down. They sought freedom in the most Godly way they knew how - through prayer.

(Source: www.eadshome.com) James Madison: At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, James Madison proposed the plan to divide the central government into three branches. He discovered this model of government from the Perfect Governor, as he read Isaiah 33:22: *For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us.*

Madison discovered three different roles of God and used this as a foundation to run our nation with three branches of government. The Scriptures were extremely important in the creation of the type of government we have.



Structure, Understanding the Declaration of Independence, Craig Seibert, youtube.com

- The Declaration of Independence is just under 1,400 words. About 400 words spell out the essence of the principles and beliefs upon which the United States was founded. These 400 key words are split about equally between the opening and the closing of the document. The other 1,000 words appear in the middle of the Declaration and outline over 25 abuses of King George III over a ten-year period.

Proverbs 3:5-6: Do we truly trust God as individuals and as a nation? 1 Timothy 4:10:

Are we committed to God - is our trust more than words?

The first few lines of the Declaration:

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America: When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Once, not so many years ago here in America, there existed a heart-felt trust, a legitimate sober life directing trust in God. Over time that trust has lost its luster. It has not only gone by the wayside, but in the eyes of many has become something that should not only be ignored, but shunned, buried and even purged from memory. Faith was a big part in the founding of this country.

Why? We don't claim to know why - we can give you some observations:

- God is forgotten due to a lack of perceived evidence.
- God is forgotten and has been replaced by science.
- God is forgotten and has been replaced by philosophy.



- God is forgotten and has been replaced by ME.

The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution) was written in 1789 by James Madison and were ratified in 1791.



Bill of rights, Dr. Mark Smith, PhD Political Science, Professor of Constitutional Law

- According to the founding fathers, the Bill of Rights did not create rights for Americans. Most of them would have believed that the rights we have are what they called God-given rights. The Bill of Rights simply recognizes those rights and then prevents government from infringing upon those particular rights. Government doesn't really create rights in that way. The government respects our rights by limiting its actions in particular areas in which we do have those rights. And so our freedom of speech exists regardless of what our government does, according to our founding fathers.

Alexander Hamilton: 1787 after the Constitutional Convention "For my own part, I sincerely esteem it (the Constitution) a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests."

The Constitution doesn't mention God, but the Declaration of Independence does. The two documents work together. A Godly faith put the Constitution together. **If we truly trust, then we will do what is asked of us: Micah 6:6-8:** For those who are called according to His purpose, our responsibility to our trust in Christ is clear. **Romans 12:1-2:** A dedicated Christian's allegiance is primarily to God through Christ.

What are the costs and the benefits of the freedoms we have or seek?

World history changed because of this vote! New Testament words for freedom:

Freedom: Strong's #1658 eleutheros (el-yoo'-ther-os); unrestrained (to go at pleasure), i.e. (as a citizen) not a slave

Freedom: Strong's #1659 eleutheroo; to liberate, i.e. (figuratively) to exempt (from moral, ceremonial or mortal liability)

Freedom: Strong's #1657 eleutheria; freedom (legitimate or licentious, chiefly moral or ceremonial)

The first word for freedom carries a physical or civil sense of being free - not a slave, not being held under: **1 Corinthians 12:13:** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or **free <1658>**; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The second word for freedom carries a very full sense of being made free - not merely "not a slave," but rather being liberated: **Romans 8:2:** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath **made <1659> me free <1659>** from the law of sin and death.

The third word for freedom carries the personal application of being liberated - the ability to make personal decisions: **Galatians 5:1:** Stand fast therefore in the **liberty <1657>** wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.



Happiness in 1776, Understanding the Declaration of Independence, Craig Seibert, youtube.com

- In our modern age, we confuse happiness with hedonism, and that is not what the founders of this document had in mind. Their perspective of happiness in 1776 would have meant this: The individual would have the freedom to use their time, talent and resources to pursue the directions in life that they believe would bring them the most satisfaction and would benefit their family, friends, fellow man and future generations the most.

There was inherent responsibility towards your fellow man and yourself. America was to be a place where your God-given freedom and liberty would be protected and we wouldn't invent our own freedom and liberty. The pursuit of happiness was not to violate the happiness of our fellow man. We today in America have that backwards. Now it's all about ME instead of pursuing goodness that benefits not only me, but those around us and the generations to come.



Observations: A marked difference between the founding of the United States and Jesus and the Apostles' teachings regarding freedom is this:

- The founders were very focused on the first definition, as their objective was a society that would be equitable and just - the civil environment.
- Jesus and the Apostles were very focused on the second and third words in our list. They were not nearly as concerned with physical freedom and the equity of society, as they understood servitude, etc., to be a temporary condition, contrasted with the deeper personal



freedom to be gained in Christ on a spiritual level. Their primary concern seemed to be grasping spiritual "freedom with responsibility."

To have an equitable and successful society, there can never be freedom from consequence; there can never be freedom from laws; there can never be freedom from responsibility, and there can never be freedom without contribution. Does God intend this freedom for the human race? Genesis 22:18: This will be God's expression of what true freedom is supposed to be, not only in the United States but in *the whole world*. This promise has not yet come true, but it will!

Jesus gave us a Declaration of Dependence!



Reading the Declaration, *John Adams (TV miniseries, 2008)*

- When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

Liberty is to do as one ought to do, not as one wants to do. But if you do as you ought to do long enough, it becomes what you want to do. We become subservient to the higher cause.

What kind of Declaration of freedom did Jesus come to deliver? John 8:23-37: Jesus had his own will, but he gave that up to do the Father's will instead.

Jesus told them how to understand that their status was one of bondage, and then he told them the price of freedom: ...³¹*To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ³³They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free? ³⁴Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.*

Jesus was telling the Pharisees that he knew they were not civilly slaves, but they were indeed spiritually slaves because they continued to sin. Jesus could set them free from that. *That is the greatest of all freedoms.*

Thomas Jefferson: November 29, 1775 Believe me, dear Sir: there is not in the British empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But, by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament proposes; and in this, I think I speak the sentiments of America.



4500 quotes, *God in America, Randall Niles*

- Let's not revise history. It is very profound that in history, there was no freedom from religion. We have over 4,500 public quotes of politicians, public representatives, quoting from Scripture or praying on public lands. This notion now that we're not somehow allowed to have a prayer or a Bible reading on public property as somehow violating the first amendment is ludicrous. And this notion that we were founded by a bunch of theists at best...no, we were founded by many theists, Evangelicals, Catholics and Protestants. It is disingenuous to say that all of these original founders were deists at best and mostly agnostics.*

Patrick Henry: May 1765 Speech to the House of Burgesses It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.

The Christian basis of this country is what gives everybody else their freedom! That's profound! **Jesus declares the freedom he brings from a source that all hearing respected - the Old Testament:** Luke 4:17-20

Who pays the highest price for freedom?

(Source: Excerpts from "Death and Freedom," a sermon by Dr. Neil Chadwick found on www.webedelic.com) On July 4 each year, Independence Day, we celebrate what for many has become the "Supremum Bonum" - the highest good, which of course in America is "freedom." Why is this? The foundation of our country was built on the sacrifices of men who were willing to lay down their lives for the sake of freedom. Let me give you a few examples from the little known histories of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence.



Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in rags. Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward. At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

Would we go to the same lengths for the cause that we believe in?



God everywhere in founding, *God in America, Randall Niles*

- *God is all over Washington D.C. "In God We Trust" is emblazoned over the Speaker of the House. We have Moses there with the Ten Commandments over the Supreme Court Building. Did you know that God is mentioned in every one of our 50 states' Constitutions, right there in the Preamble somewhere? God is mentioned four times in our Declaration of Independence, and in our national anthem. The Bible was our first textbook in America. To somehow all of a sudden say that our country was not founded on religious principles is disingenuous.*

God was clearly a central piece of the founding of this country.

The price for freedom that Jesus paid: Isaiah 53:3-12

Is our freedom truly freedom with responsibility?



Declaration vote and reading, *John Adams (TV miniseries, 2008)*

- *We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown... And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.*

So far we have seen the dedication, foresight and courage displayed at the founding of this nation. We have witnessed through history, the necessary actions attached to those aforementioned things. Hopefully, these observations have caused us to pause, consider and be thankful for those who have gone before, to appreciate their dedication to a cause that was so much larger than themselves.

Now, let us consider the cost and sacrifice necessary for true spiritual freedom. To have an equitable and successful world, there can never be freedom from consequence; there can never be freedom from laws; there can never be freedom from responsibility; and there can never be freedom from contribution. What will we offer for the freedoms we have been given? **For freedom to prevail there must be one sent to do the work: Acts 3:19-21 Freedom must indeed be fought for! Ephesians 6:10-13:** Have we truly dedicated our lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the cause of freedom in Christ? **Daniel 7:13-14:** This is a prophecy about Jesus given dominion over all people that will serve him. That is real freedom - there is still law, consequence, responsibility and contribution. What better place to have your law come from than Jesus? Who better to be responsible towards Jesus? What better place to contribute than under the rule of Jesus? His kingship will never be destroyed. Since it involves everybody, that is truly good news! **Jeremiah 31:34:** These are just two of the many Scriptures that focus us on the "bigness" of the freedom for which Christ paid. We have freedom to be dedicated to a cause and a vision. This is *so much bigger* than many of us previously thought. These Scriptures indicate *universal restoration* and an everlasting kingdom on earth for every man, woman and child who ever lived. All will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. The ransom of Jesus paid the price for the sin of Adam.

We want to be mindful to the freedoms we are given in this country. We recognize the sacrifice of the people who put their lives on the line for a greater cause so that we can have civil liberty. Then we appreciate the sacrifice that Jesus paid for us and for the world. He gave us the opportunity of life. Freedom has great meaning to all of us!

***So what does freedom mean to you?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***