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Freedom and Responsibility - Still Important?

Genesis 1:28: (NASB) *God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*



We are blessed. We live in a country where freedom of speech and assembly are a given - a country where we can choose who to worship and how we accomplish that worship. We live in a country where we can apply ourselves, work hard and attain levels of success that are not only rare, they are unheard of in many other places. We live in America and we have the freedoms that we currently enjoy because of the wisdom and sacrifice of the countless patriots who founded our country long ago. As we pause over the 4th of July weekend to celebrate their efforts and success, we also want to pause to look long and hard at our present interpretation of freedom. Have we lost our way when it comes to the privilege of living in freedom and assuming the necessary responsibilities that are inherent to it? Is our freedom here in America on borrowed time?

Leviticus 25:10: (KJV) *And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim **liberty <1865>** throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.*

The Liberty Bell quotes part of this Scripture: *proclaim liberty throughout all the land.*

The Jewish Jubilee was the year at the end of seven seven-year cycles. See **Leviticus 25:8-13**. At this time, slaves and prisoners were freed, debts were forgiven and property returned to its original owner. This important time foreshadowed God's great kingdom in the future.

Liberty: Strongs #1865 derowr (der-ore'); freedom; hence, spontaneity of outflow (go where you would like), and so clear (no restriction)

New Testament words for *freedom*:

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

Strongs #1659 eleutheroo; to exempt (from moral, ceremonial or mortal liability)

Strongs #1657 eleutheria; freedom (legitimate or licentious, chiefly moral or ceremonial)

The first word **<1865>** means a physical or civil sense of being free; not a slave; not being held under.

1 Corinthians 12:13: (KJV) *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 **<1659>** means a very full sense of being made free - not merely "not a slave," but rather being liberated.

Romans 8:2: (KJV) *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 **<1657>** means the personal application of being liberated - the ability to make personal decisions.

Galatians 5:1: (KJV) *Stand fast therefore in the **liberty <1657>** wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

But we are supposed to be servants to righteousness and self-sacrifice. We are supposed to give up our own will. How has Christ made us free? More on this soon as we will learn how true freedom and responsibility work together.

To be free is to have choice. To be free is to have self-expression. To be free is to be able to apply yourself - to decide what you would like to do. This is a good beginning!



When and where in history was humankind most free?

To figure freedom out, let us go back in history to the time when mankind was most free:

Genesis 1:27-28: Adam and Eve had freedom from sin and death. They had direct communication with God Almighty. The Garden experience defines human freedom.

It is the blessing of God that is first mentioned in our freedom legacy - the open-ended goodness of the Creator as He bestows dominion to those created in His own image.

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE MOST FREE WHEN WE HAVE THE DIRECT BLESSING OF GOD.

There are those who think God is a fictitious idea and they have no use for Him in their lives. They have decided we Christians live in a world of mythological beliefs. They are free to believe that. But the God of the Bible is in fact the Creator of the Universe and He does have a distinct and clear plan for mankind. He gave us what that plan would look like right at the beginning whether we choose to ignore it or not.

We can imagine Adam and Eve walking through the Garden immersed in the beauty, serenity and vibrancy of life that surrounded them. In America, we have a sense of freedom, but Adam and Eve lived in true freedom.

Genesis 1:29-31: It is the practicality of God that comes through next in our "freedom legacy." We first saw the blessing of God, and now we see His practicality.

God said, "I have provided for you and for everything else...now and in the future," and the result was *very good* in the eyes of God! *I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth* - The Garden was only a small fraction of the whole earth. God already had a larger plan in mind. Did all of creation really take only seven 24-hour days? No, we believe a "day" here means a period of time. Adam was told he would die *in the day* he ate the fruit, but we know he lived about 930 years: Genesis 3:5: (KJV) *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

A day with the Lord is 1,000 years: Psalms 90:4 2 Peter 3:8: From additional Scriptures, we know "Judgement Day" is actually a period of time - not one 24-hour day. We use that same expression today. For example, "In my grandfather's day, there was no television." We would never think this means grandpa had television for his entire life except for one 24-hour day.

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE MOST FREE WHEN WE APPRECIATE AND MAKE USE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

God can bless us, but we want to make sure we are using what He provides. What are we doing with all of the gifts He provides?

Responsibility is perhaps a lesser part of the equation and in the minds of many, may even be considered undesirable.

Genesis 2:15-18: It is the responsibilities that God requires that are now revealed in this story of our "freedom legacy." God's blessings, gifts and providences were given to set the context of human life on earth, and now humanity was called upon to maintain and protect that context. After all, mankind had dominion, and therefore the responsibility to keep and protect what God had given. *Cultivate and keep* was the maintenance portion of the dominion blessing, but there was more that came with dominion. Dominion also required respect for the boundaries of the free gift of our dominion.

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE MOST FREE WHEN WE ARE RESPONSIBLE - WHEN WE DO THE WORK REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN GOD'S PROVIDENCE, AND WHEN WE RESPECT AND HONOR THE BOUNDARIES OF THAT PROVIDENCE.

Dominion is a high position and of necessity must be able to stand up under testing:

Genesis 3:1-3: The test: Do you know where the boundaries have been set for you? Satan asked this in such a way that would call the boundaries into question. He posed it as, "You have dominion; do you need silly boundaries? They are limiting you. You have control!"

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE MOST FREE WHEN WE DEMONSTRATE OUR ABILITY TO KNOW THE LIMITATIONS AND THE SCOPE OF OUR FREEDOM.



There cannot be true freedom without rules. The default result of no rules is anarchy and discord.

Let us excerpt America's original pursuit of freedom with responsibility and put it against the backdrop of the scriptural principles of true freedom to better appreciate the true desires of those who signed the Declaration of Independence all those years ago.

The Declaration of Independence: (Editor's note: original capitalization preserved)
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.

Their decision to seek independence was because they believed humankind inherently had the right to be free, as endowed by God. This was a God-given right and went beyond a feeling of human entitlement. This Declaration began by honoring God.

Those who would usurp the bond between the Creator and the created will provide alternate thinking, enticing suggestions and accessible pathways, none of which provoke true freedom!

Genesis 3:4-7: Alternate thinking: *You will NOT die.* Enticing suggestions: *Your eyes will be opened.* Accessible pathway: *You will be like God.* Result: Freedom is violated!

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE NO LONGER FREE WHEN WE VIOLATE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR FREEDOM LEGACY BY ACTING ON THOSE THINGS PRESENTED TO US BY THOSE OUT OF HARMONY WITH GODLY PRINCIPLES.

Freedom includes choices. Part of this choice of freedom was for Eve to decide which voice she would listen to - the One who created freedom *because* of responsibility or the one who contradicted the idea of freedom with responsibility?

After listening to voices contrary to God's own voice, we feel exposed: Genesis 3:9-12: By violating the responsibility of their freedom, they now felt shame and wanted to hide from the very One who held their lives in His hands.

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE NO LONGER FREE WHEN WE MUST LIVE IN SHAME OF OUR ACTIONS, TRY AND DEFLECT THE BLAME FOR OUR CHOICES AND FEEL A NEED TO HIDE...THESE ARE ALL SYMPTOMS OF DENYING RESPONSIBILITY.

Adam and Eve denied freedom for their posterity.

Inevitably, we will again have to hear the voice of blessing, the voice of the Author of our freedom legacy pronounce the consequences of our accountability: Genesis 3:17-19: True freedom brings life and peace. Liberty without responsibility brings toil and hardship and will always eventually lead to death.

FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE NO LONGER FREE WHEN WE HAVE BEEN IRRESPONSIBLE AND ARE FACED WITH THE REMOVAL OF PRIVILEGE AND CHOICE, LEFT ONLY WITH THE BROKEN PIECES OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE BLESSING OF FREEDOM.

Fortunately, the giver of blessing and our freedom legacy is a God of compassion. God showed incredible benevolence even while allowing a harsh consequence.

In the midst of handing down the consequences for man's abuse of freedom, God saw fit to provide protection even as He banished them from their freedom:

Genesis 3:21-24: Lovingly hidden within the compassion of God's protection was a veiled hope (the sacrifice of an animal picturing the future sacrifice of Jesus) in the garments of skins. God carried out justice but with a merciful heart. God's intention for His human creation created in His image was and still is for dominion, responsibility and yes, freedom. This freedom is a future hope and promise.



FREEDOM MESSAGE: WE ARE NO LONGER FREE WHEN WE HAVE BETRAYED THE GIVER OF OUR FREEDOM. WITHOUT EMBRACING THE FULL SCOPE OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY, FREEDOM JUST BECOMES A DISTANT MEMORY. GOD KNEW THIS AND PLANNED A MUCH BETTER ENDING THAT COULD ONLY COME WITH A COST.

There are dire consequences when we betray the principles of whatever freedom we are given - betraying the responsibility freedom is built upon. The world is in search of their rights, and yet this search is influenced by Satan who was the original coveter, the original seeker of things NOT rightly his. This is where freedom breaks down, as it is not being responsible to the guidelines with which it was given.

Satan, the original coveter, is prophetically spoken of here: Isaiah 14:12-14: We see this same spirit in the world today with its "me me me" culture with the attitude of, "What I feel dictates how I act, and how I act dictates how you must respond." That is satanic. True freedom cannot be obtained by going down that path of anarchy and destruction. **In contrast, Jesus came to this world to restore the freedom that had been lost. Here is our silver lining to all of the mess: Luke 4:16-20:** Jesus explained that he came to bring freedom - the freedom that had been lost in the Garden of Eden. Jesus came to set free the oppressed - all of us. He was coming to do the will of God, whereas Satan tried to take the place of the will of God.

The Declaration of Independence begins and ends with God. Freedom with responsibility is put in the context of godliness, where it truly belongs. Do we even know what "sacred honor" is these days?

(Quoting from the Declaration of Independence in red) **With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence** - God DOES protect us! Psalm 91:1-2

Because we fundamentally trust in God, we therefore are responsible to believe his word: Psalm 119:104-106: *Therefore I hate every false way* - Our society instead seems to *tolerate* every false way. Where we have a scope of influence, we need to apply godly righteousness, especially with our children and a sense of entitlement.

Belief in His word makes us responsible to stand up for it against the usurper Satan: Ephesians 6:10-12

Mutually Pledging Our Lives, Fortunes and Sacred Honor - Freedom for excellence - ours is an opportunity to fully offer up all that we are and have: Romans 6:18-19: We must hold to the guidelines of freedom. **Pledging your sacred honor is not just a statement; it is a day-by-day way of life! 2 Peter 1:5-8**

What are we doing so that God can bless us? Are we living in accordance with true, scriptural principles of freedom? Are we living in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Genesis? The Garden of Eden experience was the model of true human freedom. Defiance to the principles of righteousness and responsibility have left us without such freedom.

Freedom is a byproduct of God's blessing, providential overruling, plan, guidance and direction. On the other side, freedom is the byproduct of our *responsibility* to God's blessing, providential overruling, plan, guidance and direction. It is our responsibility to live up to His guidelines.

We have to look at that personally - how do I live up to the freedom opportunities that God has given *me*? Let this Fourth of July weekend help you to thank those who have put their lives on the line for us and also help us to focus on spiritually what we can do to be free in Christ.

***So, freedom and responsibility - still important?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***