

True Freedom

Next Thursday, we as a nation will celebrate Independence Day, better known as The Fourth of July. It will be the USA's 248th birthday. It is a federal holiday in the USA celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776.

The Declaration of Independence was ratified by the Second Continental Congress made up of representatives from the Thirteen Original Colonies. It established the 13 Colonies as the United States as free independent states no longer under the control of King George 3rd of Great Britain.

Many people think that this event on July 4th started the American Revolutionary War, and it is where our freedom began. As a nation it did. But our spiritual freedom happened over two thousand years ago and was fought for by One Man. It was only the formal declaration of separation as the fighting had begun the year before in 1775. The Battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19th, 1775.

British troops fired upon American farmers in Lexington, MA. This was during an effort to search for military supplies that would be used to engage the British. They would then march on to Concord to perform the same task. The news of what had happened in Lexington reached Concord before the British soldiers did. They were outnumbered four to one on the North Bridge. Approximately four hundred Minutemen Militia opened up on one hundred British soldiers. There were casualties on both sides, but the British withdrew. This is the location of the famous “shot heard round the world,” a phrase that refers to the opening shot of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. This triggered the American Revolutionary War. The Declaration of Independence was not written until 15 months later.

It was a long hard fight for independence from Great Britain and victory did not come until October of 1781, when General Cornwallis surrendered to American forces at Yorktown, VA. The war was officially over when the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, in which Great Britain finally recognized the sovereignty and independence of the United States. According to the World Atlas, nine thousand Americans died in battle in the War for Independence. We fought and won our freedom.

So, do we really have freedom? What exactly is freedom? We know I love using definitions and according to Merriam- Webster's Dictionary, freedom is defined as: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action. Liberation from slavery or restraint or power of another, independence.

Absence of constraint in choice and action sure seems to fit the actions of so many in this nation, which is a Constitutional Republic, not a democracy. Under a constitution, certain inalienable rights cannot be taken away by the government. In a democracy, the majority is unrestrained and can impose its will on the minority. It certainly seems we live in a democracy, at least that what the "left" is screaming about losing if Trump gets elected. Left vs, right?

Ecclesiastes 10:2- "A man's heart *is* at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left."

Matthew 25:32-33- "And He shall gather before Him all the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at *His* left."

I wonder if God was giving a hint in those scriptures...

Freedom is often confused with “liberty.” Both terms are often used synonymously but fundamentally different. Both imply the right to do as we please. However, freedom is more of a broad term, whereas liberty tightens it up a bit.

Both include the power to do as one pleases, but liberty (according to Merriam-Webster) adds “the positive enjoyment of various social, political, or economic rights and privileges.” Rules. Freedom really applies to whether or not we obey or not. There is a word we have all come to be familiar with in our walk towards the Kingdom. Obey. We obey God’s Commandments and keep His Sabbaths and Holy Days. We are free to choose to obey or not.

1 John 5:2-3- “By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”

John 14:15- “If you love Me, keep the commandments— namely, My commandments.”

While we may be “free,” we still have laws that must be obeyed. We are not free to wander and do as we please, unless you are WOKE or an alphabet pervert, then the rules do not apply to you.

The consequences for not obeying the law are written in books and statutes. Break the law and you could go to prison. The consequences for breaking God’s Commandments are also found in His Book. Breaking God’s Commandments could yield the thousand-year nap we have discussed, or it could land you in a lake of fire. We are free to choose.

John 8:36- “Therefore, if the Son shall set you free, you shall truly be free.”

Freedom is never free. The liberty we enjoy has always come at a price. Sadly, it is all too often paid for in blood. He made the ultimate sacrifice. Without firing a shot or drawing a weapon, Jesus Christ fought and won the greatest battle for freedom in all eternity.

To win freedom, enduring hardships is a necessity. General George Washington and his Continental Army had to endure one of the coldest winters of the

Revolutionary War at Valley Forge, PA. From December 1777 until June 1778, General Washington and his Army were encamped at this location.

2,000 of Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge died from exposure, sickness, hunger, or a combination thereof. They were ill equipped to manage the winter weather. Some regiments were without shoes and wrapped their feet in blankets. But they endured.

Jesus Himself had a wilderness experience as well. He fasted for forty days and forty nights. He was not up against a regiment of British soldiers; He was up against Satan himself. His battle did not occur when he was fresh and fed, Satan attacked when He was famished and weak. Satan tempted Jesus three times.

Matthew 4:1-11- "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit in order to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted *for* forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was famished. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered *and* said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of *the* mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him upon the edge of the temple, And said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down; for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning

You, and they shall bear You up in *their* hands, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’ ” Jesus said to him, “Again, it is written, ‘You shall not tempt *the* Lord your God.’ ” After that, the devil took Him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, And said to Him, “All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him alone shall you serve.’ ” Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

Jesus stood His ground. He endured. We can too.

James 4:6-8- “But He gives greater grace. This is *the* reason it says, “God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.” Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist *the* devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded!”

Making tough critical decisions was another part facing General Washington during December of 1776. After suffering losses in the battles of Fort Washington and Fort Lee, General Washington was forced to retreat from the British across

New Jersey and take refuge in Pennsylvania. They camped on the west side of the Delaware River (this area is now called Washington's Crossing for obvious reasons; I grew up in this area).

General Washington knew he needed to make a bold move and was under pressure to obtain a victory to boost sagging morale. On December 26th, 1776, he loaded 2400 men in boats and crossed the Delaware River. He and his troops then marched all night, ten miles to Trenton, NJ. At dawn, they caught a garrison of 1500 Hessian Troops (German soldiers hired by Great Britain) by surprise. Some managed to escape but most were captured and surrendered to General Washington giving him a much-needed victory.

The greatest battle decision ever made, and the true birthplace of freedom came on the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. After the Passover gathering, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

Matthew 26:36-38- "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here, while I go onward and pray." And He took with *Him* Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, *and* He began to be very melancholy and deeply depressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

Deeply grieved and troubled about what was coming and the hour of His death approaching, Jesus fell to the ground and made the most critical decision of all time.

Luke 22:42-44- “Saying, “Father, if You are willing to take away this cup from Me—; nevertheless, **not My will, but Your will be done.**” Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

Mark 14:36- “And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible with You. Remove this cup from Me! Yet not what I will, but what You will.”

He could have said, “ah the heck with this, they are not worth dying for.” Is it any wonder? It is difficult to imagine that the Creator of all things, gave that up to come to Earth as a man to be murdered for likes of mankind. Or God the Father, loving us so much, He permitted Jesus to do this and sent Him anyway. But that decision put victory in His Hands, now all He has to do is...die.

But die He did, for us, all of us, a bunch of sinners. And not just die, He was beaten and scourged and then crucified.

Romans 5:8- “But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus did not have an army with Him, only His disciples. They were not the best back-up as they could not even stay awake and keep watch for Him.

Mark 14:37-38- “Then He came and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Were you not able to watch one hour? Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Sleeping on duty during war time may have gotten you shot. It did not matter as things were set in motion and Judas was arriving with the Pharisees, Chief Priests, and a Band of Soldiers to arrest Jesus. We had discussed a while ago about the number of men that showed up to make the arrest. A band of men alone is between 300 and 600. There was plenty of back-up.

John 18:3-6- “Then Judas, after receiving a band and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with torches and lamps and weapons. Jesus, therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Who are you seeking?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarean.” Jesus said to them, “I AM.” And Judas, who was betraying Him, was also standing with them. But when He said to them, “I AM,” they went backward and fell to the ground.”

This is another scripture that amazes me. These several hundred men were all knocked to the ground when Jesus answered them in saying, “I AM.” Couple that with healing an ear that Peter had just cut off of one of them, I believe I would have resigned my commission and looked for employment elsewhere.

After a long and drawn-out conflict, both the British and the American Armies were worn out. Morale, food shortages, and war debt plagued the American Army. The British were hampered with a lack of public support much like we witnessed here at home during the Vietnam War. Perseverance will yield the victor.

In September of 1781, General Washington with the additional support of French soldiers marched south to Yorktown, VA. General Cornwallis and his nine hundred

troops were resting. Eight thousand American and French troops were joined by 12,000 militia and they surrounded Cornwallis. Within a couple of weeks, the American forces began to bombard General Cornwallis and his army.

On October 14th, 1781, the American and French assets attacked the fortified British positions. On October 17th, an emissary came out waving a white handkerchief to discuss terms of surrender. Two days later on October 19th, 1781, the last battle of the Revolutionary War was over. As we mentioned earlier, the formal surrender did not occur until the signing of the Treat of Paris in 1783.

This was one war that was truly fought for our earthly freedom. Most of the other wars this nation has been involved in were foreign wars, fought for the freedom of someone else. Were they truly a fight for freedom or a fight against evil? Brave men and women gave their lives for this cause.

Triumph was assured in Gethsemane and the last battle for this victory was fought on a cross at Calvary. The enemy used three nails and a crown of thorns to defeat Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so he thought. But little did he know, it was not over just yet.

John 19:30- “And so, when Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, “It is finished.” And bowing His head, He yielded up His spirit.”

There were cheers and parties in the enemy's camp for three whole days...until the stone was rolled away.

We celebrate Independence Day on July 4th. We became a nation 248 years ago, free from the oppression of another nation. True freedom was secured over two thousand years ago. Our freedom from the bondage of sin and death has been won, fought for, and paid with the life and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. The best celebration is yet to come. Let freedom ring! Amen.

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