

The Birthplace of Freedom

Today we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day. It is a federal holiday celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776. Many celebrations are already underway and the parades and fireworks will be epic.

250 years is a long time for a Republic to last. Benjamin Franklin was once asked, “What do we have a Republic or a Monarchy?” Franklin replied, “ A Republic if you can keep it.” Historically, Republics last about two hundred years. Political stability, economic conditions, social issues, wars, are all factors in determining how long they last. The presence of the rule of law and strong governance is critical for sustaining a Republic. We are definitely witnessing political influences to change our present system. The division has widened and it seems opposition to our current form of Government is under constant attack by those who want to change it.

It is tragic that many schools do not teach complete U.S. History as it may “offend” someone. We have seen the erosion of truth in schools (and also in churches), and it is being replaced (much like churches) with a watered down version that is more easily accepted. **Truth is truth (John 14:6)**, especially when it comes to the Word of God. But for discussion’s sake, we will take a brief look at the founding of our nation and the Birthplace of Freedom.

Most sources will list Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA as the Birthplace of American Freedom as the Declaration of Independence was signed and ratified by the Second Continental Congress at this location in Philadelphia. The Continental Congress was made up of representatives from the Thirteen Original Colonies. It established the 13 Colonies of the United States as free independent states and no longer under the control of King George 3rd of Great Britain. Division between representatives is nothing new as there were at least three representatives who failed/refused to sign the Declaration. Only three?

Many people think that the signing of this document on July 4th started the American Revolutionary War, and it is where our freedom began. As a nation it

did. It was only the formal declaration of separation as the fighting had begun the year before in 1775 with 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. Another misconception is that the Constitution was written in 1776. It was not drafted until 1787.

So, do we really have freedom? What exactly is freedom? My go to source for definitions, 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 the 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 is what the "left" is screaming. Left vs right? God addressed that in His Word. Good vs. evil is a better fit.

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 us 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 and responsibilities. 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 whether 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.”

If you genuinely love God, **you will** keep His Commandments **exactly** as He said to in His Word. We have been given free will whether or not we will obey is our choice.. We still have *laws that must be obeyed*. Break them and there are consequences. 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.

- Revolutionary War (1775-1783): Approximately 25,000 Americans killed.
- War of 1812 (1812-1815): About 15,000 Americans killed.
- Mexican American War (1846-1848): Roughly 13,000 Americans killed.
- Civil War (1861-1865): Estimated 620,000 to 750,000 Americans killed.
- World War I (1917-1918): Approximately 116,516 Americans killed.
- World War II (1941-1945): About 405,399 Americans killed.
- Korean War (1950-1953): Roughly 36,574 Americans killed.
- Vietnam War (1955-1975): Approximately 58,220 Americans killed.
- Gulf War (1990-1991): About 294 Americans killed.
- Post-9/11 conflicts (2001-present): Estimated 7,000+ Americans killed.

Overall, the total number of American military deaths in wars since the Revolution is **over 1.3 million**. One thing that is evident of Satan running amok in our nation is the rise of the “democratic socialists.” This is just a fluffy decorated name for communism. In Washington, D.C., there are two memorials representing over **94,000 Americans killed** (Korean War, Viet Nam) **fighting against communism**. **Now we are electing them to office**.

Enduring hardships is a necessity in obtaining freedom. 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.

Making tough critical decisions was another element facing General Washington during December of 1776. After suffering losses in the battles of Fort Mifflin and Fort Mifflin, 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.

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 Treaty of Paris in 1783.

This was the war that was indeed fought for our independence. Most of the other wars this nation has been involved in were foreign wars. We fought for the freedom of someone else, fighting against tyranny, fascism, communism, and radical Islam. Were they truly a fight for freedom or a fight against evil? Evil is always at the core of conflict.

Bloodshed, hardships, and critical decisions also had to be made in a *different* war for freedom. This war was for the very souls of mankind with an eternal victor. It was the battle for our salvation, for our freedom from sin and death. It was fought by One alone, without an army or weapons. Much like the wars throughout history, there would be bloodshed but just once Casualty, Jesus Christ.

Like those in the conflict of battle, Jesus had to endure a hardship like any other. He was faced with both human *and* spiritual adversaries. He endured a forty day fast in the wilderness. It may not have been a Valley Forge location, but the enemy was far worse than anything General Washington faced from the British. Most of us can relate to the difficulty there is fasting for the Day of Atonement, much less no food or water for forty days. 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 and resisted the enemy. He endured. Because of His sacrifice, 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!”

The most critical warfare decision ever made came on the night Jesus was betrayed. 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. The words Christ spoke that night in the Garden of Gethsemane makes **it** the true birthplace of freedom.

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, “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 all that up to come to Earth as a man to be murdered for the likes of mankind. Or God the Father, loving us so much, He permitted Jesus to do this, knowing the mission ahead and sent Him anyway. But that decision put victory in His Hands, now all He had to do was...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. The Lord 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.**

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.”

If a Roman soldier was caught sleeping on duty, it was a death sentence. It did not matter as things were set in motion and prophecy was being fulfilled. Judas was arriving with the Pharisees, Chief Priests, and a Band of Soldiers to arrest Jesus. We have previously discussed the number of men that showed up to make the

arrest. At that time, a band of men alone was between 300 and 600. Judas had brought 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 by saying, “**I AM.**” These soldiers and Temple Guards must have been related to the Egyptian soldiers who pursued Moses and the Nation of Israel into the Red Sea! Several hundred men knocked to the ground by the words “I AM!” In addition, they saw Jesus heal an ear of a High Priest’s servant after Peter had cut it off with a sword (John 18:10)! They had to be exceptionally brave or incredibly dim. I believe I would have resigned my commission and looked for employment elsewhere.

The Garden of Gethsemane is the true birthplace of Freedom. Christ fought and died for us so that we have victory over sin and death. Satan fought hard and through lies and betrayal, he orchestrated Christ's death. Satan's weapons were three nails and a crown of thorns. Jesus died on the cross in what the enemy thought was His defeat at Calvary.

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. Satan was ecstatic; he thought he had defeated The Son of God and won the war. For three whole days and nights, the celebration continued... until the stone in front of Christ's tomb rolled away. The war was now *truly* over. Satan surrendered unconditionally but his word is as honorable as an Iranian Peace agreement.

We celebrate our independence from a tyrannical king on July 4th. We became a nation 250 years ago, free from the oppression of another nation. Sadly, many who think they walk in the light of liberty are still in bondage without realizing it.

Those who choose to worship God man's way, ignore His Word, and fail to keep His Commandments, are too blind to see the chains still on their feet.

Psalm 119:44-45- “So shall I keep Your law continually forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.”

True freedom was secured over two thousand years ago and won by One. Our Savior fought and died for us. He paid for our liberty with His life. Our greatest victory will come when we surrender to God and His way of life. Our greatest life will be when we die to ourselves and strive to grow in the image of Jesus Christ. God's gift of freedom is free, but it will cost us everything.

Matthew 24:13- “But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved.”

Revelation 2:10- “Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.”

From Valley Forge to Bunker Hill, to Shiloh and Five Forks, to Verdun and the Eastern Front, to Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima, to the Chosin Reservoir and Inchon, to Khe Sanh and the Ia Drang Valley, to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, we will never forget the cost of the 1.3 million lives lost for “freedom.” These locations are written in history where so many gave all they had.

The most precious blood ever shed was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for the greatest victory ever, our eternal life and freedom from sin and death. From Gethsemane to Calvary to an empty tomb, the battle that began before creation was over. True freedom from sin and death are ours *if* we endure to the end.

As we remember our blessings living in the land of the free, we must never forget it is because of the brave. Victory is ours through Christ Jesus; the best celebration is yet to come! Eternal life and liberty lie ahead! Amen.

