

"Your Real Independence Day"

"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31b-32 NASB)

Today we want to talk about Independence Day, referred to as the 4th of July. I would like to give you a little history, talk about freedom of this nation, the freedom that Jesus Christ gives us, the truth He offers, all by the Blood of Jesus, the perfect slain lamb that allows us to have eternal life.

~A Little History~

As you know, tomorrow we celebrate the 234th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence which was signed on July 4, 1776 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where 56 men from 13 states (colonies) laid down their lives, their fortunes, their homes, their honor and the welfare of their own families for a cause – the cause of Freedom from tyranny. (Absolute power). And so began this great country called the United States of America, “known as the land of the brave and free.”

It was the beginning of a long struggle with King George III of England and the mightiest army and navy in the world. A struggle ensued to free America from the clutches of a greedy King and taskmaster that exacted a heavy toll upon the citizens of the colonies of the new world.

The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence contains some of the most stirring words ever penned by man:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,
That among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.....”

The framers of our U.S. Constitution knew and recognized that our freedom, “real” freedom is an endowment from God and no one else. Let me remind you, true freedom comes from God and God alone.

The founders and early leaders of this country, with all their hearts believed that in order for this country to last, America had to stand the test of time, in order for America to preserve freedom, she must live, govern and conduct her affairs “under God.” They had left religious repression behind. They wanted “One Nation, Under God.”

There were many Christians involved with the founding of our nation and I believe that they used the Bible and the Ten Commandments as the cornerstone for their belief; even if they were not what we may call, “full blown Christians.” And some writings do suggest that a number of the signers were not Christians. And if that is true, God still used these men to establish this nation. You see, God can use anyone he chooses!

President Abraham Lincoln wrote that “The only assurance of our nation’s safety is to lay our foundation in morality and religion.”

I think we can all agree that, “The founders of our country wanted the United States to be a place where all were free to worship as they chose, without governmental restriction or regulation.

Our founding Fathers consistently spoke of the need for utilizing the Bible and Judeo-Christian values in defining and preserving this great nation.

Even twelve of the original 13 colonies incorporated the entire Ten Commandments into their civil and criminal codes.

President John Adams stated, “The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal code as well as a moral and religious code. These are laws essential to the existence of men in society and most of which have been enacted by every Nation which ever profess any code of laws. Vain indeed would be the search among the writings of secular history to be so broad, so complete and so solid a basis of morality as the Ten Commandments lay down.”

President George Washington said, “It is impossible to govern the world without God and the Bible. Of all dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, our religion and morality are indispensable supporters.”

~God birthed America and God has blessed America~

I believe without the preeminence of God, America would not have existed. Let me tell you just one story among many, where the results had to be only God's will for it to come to pass. God had to have intervened.

British commander William Howe was moving 30,000 Veteran British soldiers to take New York. General George Washington only had 18,000 inexperienced troops. It was 1776. British troops outflanked Washington and Washington lost 1,000 men and two top Generals in the fighting.

Washington's troops were discouraged. But, without any known reason the British halted their troops. Had they kept on pressing in as they had been, they would have destroyed Washington and the troops. Yet still, Washington's army was trapped on Long Island. The only route of escape was the treacherous East River. That day the weather was very bad and seemed that it was impossible to cross the East River.

Washington called for a prayer meeting to ask God's guidance and help. He then decided to attempt to cross the river. It was storming, then suddenly at 11:00 P.M. the wind died and the British raid stopped. The river was as smooth as glass. The soldiers started crossing and a gentle breeze came up behind them to push them along. Even with this miracle, it still would be impossible to get all troops across to Manhattan Island before daybreak. Then just before daybreak, thick fog draped over them, thus hiding them from the British troops. When the fog lifted, British commander Howe was shocked; Washington and his troops had escaped. They had all successfully crossed the East River. The to be, First President of the United States, George Washington and his men recognized God's miracle and blessing on America.

~Freedom~

God gives you freedom to choose whether you continue to walk with him or not, just as George Washington and his troops searched out the guidance and purpose of God in great decision making times.

When we come to know Jesus - Jesus who is the Truth, the Life, and the Way – that’s when we really learn what Freedom really means.

As Christians we take our freedom seriously but also joyously, so we celebrate not only as a nation founded on freedom but as people who have discovered and want to share the ultimate freedom in Jesus Christ. There are no other viable options for lasting freedom. This freedom in Christ calls us to celebrate it, to share it and to live it out each day. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free!

Patrick Henry said, “It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!”

When Jesus makes you free you are free indeed!
Jesus provides that uncommon freedom.

- ❖ A freedom that can only be experienced through His saving grace.
- ❖ A freedom that can give you a greater liberty than any law.
- ❖ A freedom that can give you a greater liberty than a constitution of man.
- ❖ A freedom that no man can take away.
- ❖ A freedom that no law can stop.
- ❖ A freedom that no power of hell can destroy.

That’s an uncommon freedom – Freedom with Jesus Christ.

~Freedom under God or Freedom from God~

Somewhere between 1776 and 2010 America redefined and reinterpreted “Freedom under God,” to mean “Freedom from God.”

Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has attributed the fall of the Roman Empire to:

1. The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society.
2. Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public monies for free bread and circuses for the populace.

3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.
4. The building of gigantic armaments (arming for war) when the real enemy was within, the decadence (moral decline) of the people.
5. The decay of religion—faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.

Just look around, when you compare these five items with the culture of the United States, we are close to or beyond where Rome was before their fall. Can we expect anything different?

The verse in Proverbs 16:25 comes to mind, *There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.* (Pro 16:25 NASB) As you probably remember, even the prodigal son came to his senses in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15. Are we individually and collective as a nation going to do the same thing? Which direction are we going to take, are we going to come to our senses? I heard the other day that according to a recent survey, 62% of Americans believe that we are heading down the wrong highway. As the Bible would put it, “we are on the wide road to destruction.”

~Consider the First Amendment to our Constitution~.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Nowhere in this amendment or any other portion of our Constitution do we see any mention of “separation of church and state”.

It was never the intent of the founding fathers to keep the church out of government, but rather to keep the government out of the church.

~Culture Shift~

During the 1960's there was a significant cultural shift in America. The rules began to be challenged. People thought that if there were any rules at all

then there is no freedom. True Freedom meant no rules at all. No laws, no morals, no community standards – just plain, true freedom. This led to Free Love, Free Drugs, Free Sex – Free Everything! If it feels good – do it, became the war cry of the time.

What is the answer to this craziness? Apparently Religion is not the answer. Today there are more churches than ever, more corruption, hypocrisy in government and churches than ever before.

In Jesus' day the world was not unlike ours, government and churches were corrupt. One day when Jesus was comforting his disciples Thomas asked him the question, how do we know the way? *Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. John 14:6 NASB)* Today in this confused world those words are still echoing. What does it mean? Going to church will not get you into heaven; works will not get you into heaven. Nothing will get you to heaven except the blood of Jesus Christ, when He died upon the tree to give us the option of eternal life or hell.

Of all religions in the world how do we know Jesus is the way? When it comes to eternal life, Confucius is dead, Mohammed is dead, only Jesus claimed and proved victory over sin, death, hell and the grave. If your life is lost without direction or purpose then follow Jesus because He is THE WAY!
~Jesus is the truth~

The church of Jesus Christ (All churches) is allowing our nation to slide headlong into a quagmire of moral relativism where the only "truth" embraced is that there is "no truth." Our hands-off approach to the decay of morality and truth jeopardizes our "real" freedom everyday we apathetically sit idly by.

The world teaches no absolutes, Jesus says there is! The big lie; "It does not matter what you believe about God as long as it helps you." I have news for you; your belief does not create truth. Truth is true whether you believe it

or not. What you must do is check out your belief and see that it is the truth. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, *"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* (John 8:31-32 NASB) Later in the Gospel of John Jesus said, *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."* (John 8:36 NASB) Yes, Jesus frees us from our sins with His truth.

It seems that anytime man is left to his own devices long enough, things begin to go sour. Our country is only a couple of hundred years old. Yet, here we are, seemingly drifting slowly back towards the religiously repressive past that this country was founded to end. I know no one likes pessimism. Neither do I. But, I have some bad news for you today. And the news is, man's ways will never end as long as man is ruling this earth. If the world, as we know it ends tomorrow or five hundred years from now, people will still be struggling to keep from coming under the will of God! And they will still dislike, even despise those of us who so gladly submit to God's will.

You see, you have to know the bad news in order to see how good the Good News Gospel of Jesus Christ really is.

Why don't we celebrate the independence of our "One Nation" by staying "Under God"? This nation was founded "under God" and I believe He has blessed us for it.

Jesus tells of a way to have that freedom – "know the truth." John 14:6 Jesus is the truth. *Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."* (John 14:6 NASB) When Pilate asked, "What is Truth?" (John 18:38) The truth was standing before him and he didn't even know it. Look at John 18:38; *Pilate *said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and *said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."* (John 18:38 NASB) Jesus came into this world to "bear witness to the truth", (John 18:37) *Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I*

am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

(John 18:37 NASB)

There's a truth that only Jesus can supply.

- ✚ The truth in Jesus frees us from the consequences of sin,
- ✚ The truth in Jesus frees us from self-deception,
- ✚ The truth in Jesus frees us from deception by Satan.
- ✚ The truth in Jesus show us the way to eternal life with God.
- ✚ The truth in Jesus will indeed set us free – free from sin' death penalty.

~Christian Principles~

Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, on January 1, 1802 in an address to the Danbury Baptists said; "The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall; it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government."

An unknown writer wrote; "Challenges to the Constitutionality of the government being run by Christian principles continued throughout the late 1800's until finally these challenges arrived at the Supreme Court. In the case of Reynolds v. United States, 1878, the court pulled out Jefferson's speech in its entirety and confirmed that Jefferson also said that Christian principles were never to be separated from government. The Supreme Court used Jefferson's speech for the next 15 years to make sure that Christian principles stayed part of government. It remained this way until 1947, when, in the first time in the Supreme Court's history, the court used only eight words out of Jefferson's speech."

~Some Other Events Since 1776~

In 1782, the U.S. Congress voted in favor of a resolution recommending and approving the Bible for use in schools.

Abraham Lincoln, when asked if he thought God was on our side. “Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side. My great concern is to be on God’s side.”

~Court Cases~

- If portions of the New Testament were read without explanation, they could be, and had been, psychologically harmful to the child.

Abington v. Schempp, June 17, 1963

- It is unconstitutional for a student to pray aloud.

Reed v. Van Hoven, 1965

- The Court ruled that Secular Humanism is a legitimate religion equivalent to Christianity under the law.

Tricosso v. Watkins, 1963 and again in 1986.

- Atheism is ruled a religion.

Court decision in 1977.

~The Blood of Jesus~

Jesus loves us so much and yet He will allow events to happen and allows us to make the wrong choices if we want to. We have that freedom in Christ.

When you are under Satan’s bondage you don’t have a choice of whether to live in sin or not – You will live in sin! Satan is a hard taskmaster. He will take you deeper, farther, and longer than you want to go.

- The Blood of Jesus will break the Yoke of Sin that hangs around our neck.
- The Blood of Jesus will break the chains of oppression that bind us.
- The Blood of Jesus will wash away every sin and stain that is on our heart and soul.
- The Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ will break every power of hell that binds us.

~Judgment is Coming~

We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. No one else can do it for us. "It's one on one." You won't get in on someone else's coat tails. The Bible tells us in Romans 14:12; *So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.* (Rom 14:12 NASB)

The Bible tells in Corinthians that today is the day. *for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"--*
(2 Co 6:2 NASB)

There is no escape if we neglect salvation. Look inside of Hebrews 2:3. *how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,*
(Heb 2:3 NASB)

When we accept Christ, He removes our old Master and makes us His children.

Let's praise God, our Father in heaven for adopting us into His kingdom.

In Christ we have life, liberty, freedom and truth.

This is your day of liberation.

And because of Christ we can pursue and obtain happiness.

This Independence Day, let us celebrate the freedom we have because of what Christ Jesus has done for us.

You better be right, before it's too late.

When you meet Jesus, this is "your real Independence Day."



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