Freedom in Christ

John 8:36

Tomorrow our country will celebrate Independence Day! Whether we believe it or not we are blessed to live in America where, as some have said, “Freedom Rings.” But just as others have said “There ain’t no free lunch,” the same is true of freedom. Freedom comes at a cost and it should never be taken for granted. As the late Ronald Reagan once said:

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”

I am thankful for our freedoms here in the United States. And I am thankful for the generations of Americans who have come from all over the globe believing that the United States was a place for freedom and justice for all. But today I am going to remind you that true freedom is not just meant for our physical life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Freedom for our souls can only be found in Jesus and this liberty, the liberty that cost Jesus His life, is available to all will declare their dependence on Him. Yes, it is true that the Declaration of Independence was a powerful turning point in our Country’s history.

However, by using a play on words, I say that true freedom can only be found when you make a declaration of dependence on Jesus as God, Savior, and King.

Spiritually speaking a Declaration of Independence is a guarantee of failure. Freedom from sin only comes through dependence on Jesus. As the Got Questions website says:

“…the way to stop sinning is not to add more rules. God knew this. In fact, He gave us the law so that we would be aware of our sin and turn to Him (Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 3:23-26). The law is good. It is a reflection of God’s nature and His perfection. But it was not given to us for our salvation. Christ fulfills the law for us (Matthew 5:17).

When we disagree with God and hang onto the idea that we must fulfill the law, we lose our joy in salvation and set ourselves up for failure. We labor under a terrible burden. We feel pressured to do something to secure salvation, but, at the same time, our sin nature renders us unable to obey the law. The more we focus on the law, the more our sin nature rebels. The more our sin nature rebels, the more frightened we become that we are not saved. The more frightened and joyless we become, the more tempting sin’s promise of happiness is.

The only way to break the cycle and stop sinning is to accept the fact that we cannot stop sinning. This may seem contradictory, but if a person does not stop trying to save himself, he will never rest in the knowledge that God has saved him. The joy of salvation comes from accepting the fact that God’s grace covers us, that He will change us and conform us to the image of Christ, and that it is His work, not ours (Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20-21). Once this reality is truly grasped, sin loses its power. We no longer feel the impulse to turn to sin as a means of temporary relief from anxiety, because the anxiety and pressure has been relieved once for all by Christ (Hebrews 10:10, 14). Then, the good works we accomplish in faith are done because of love and joy rather than out of fear or duty.

Jesus did all the fighting for us. We didn’t draft up our own declaration of Independence. He made the declaration, His was the only John Hancock that was necessary for our freedom. As the apostle John wrote:

“…if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.”

John 8:36 NLT

As William Tyndale once wrote:

“The law and the Gospel are two keys. The law is the key that shutteth up all men under condemnation, and the gospel is the key which opens the door and lets them out.”

With that thought in mind, I will remind you of six things that Jesus gives us freedom from. Six things that believers are no longer imprisoned by.

1. Freedom from the penalty of sin. (Romans 6:23)
   1. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 NLT
2. Freedom from the slavery of sin. (Romans 6:14)
   1. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace. Romans 6:14 NLT
3. Freedom from our family ties to the devil. (Galatians 4:1-7)
   1. 4 Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. 2 They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. 3 And that’s the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles[a] of this world. 4 But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.[b] 6 And because we[c] are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”[d] 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child.[e] And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. Galatians 4:1-7 NLT
4. Freedom from the Jewish law and sacrificial system. (Romans 3:19-22)
   1. 19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. 20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. 21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. Romans 3:19-22 NLT
   2. 23 There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. 24 But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. 25 Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save[e] those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. 26 He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven. 27 Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people’s sins. 28 The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever. Hebrews 7:23-28 NLT
5. Freedom to live for others. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24; Galatians 5:13)
   1. 23 You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is beneficial. 24 Don’t be concerned for your own good but for the good of others. 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 NLT
   2. 13 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. 14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. Galatians 5:13-15 NLT
6. Freedom from the fear of death (especially the second death). (John 11:25; Revelation 20:11-15))
   1. 25 Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. John 11:25 NLT
   2. 11 And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave[b] gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. 14 Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. 15 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 NLT

Do you want to truly be free? Then make a declaration of dependence. Don’t try and live another day thinking you can win the internal revolutionary war, on sin, by yourself.

In the spiritual realm a declaration of independence leads to sin and death. This is our old family tradition. Satan pridefully declared his independence from God.

Instead, Jesus says,

“I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. 35 A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. 37 Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there’s no room in your hearts for my message. 38 I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father.”

39 “Our father is Abraham!” they declared.

“No,” Jesus replied, “for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. 40 Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. 41 No, you are imitating your real father.”

They replied, “We aren’t illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father.”

42 Jesus told them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. 43 Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It’s because you can’t even hear me! 44 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does.

John 8:34-44 NLT

If you want liberty for your soul, put your trust and belief in Jesus the Victorious King. Only then will freedom truly ring!

This is the freedom we should be reminding every generation about. Because what Ronald Reagan said about this country is also true of the gospel.

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in (in God’s family) where men were free.”