

“What IS Freedom?”

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This weekend, we're celebrating the birthday of our nation, the freedom we have, and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. It was a difficult decision for each man who placed his name on it. As John Adams signed, he said, *"Whether we live or die, sink or swim, succeed or fail, I stand behind this Declaration of Independence. And if God wills it, I am ready to die in order that this country might experience freedom."*

It was that kind of patriotism which led men, armed with little more than hunting rifles, to fight in battle against, what at that time was, the most powerful nation in the world. Many of our forefathers paid a terrible price in the Revolutionary War, but they were victorious so that you and I might be citizens of this *"land of the free and home of the brave."*

But what we often forget is that in declaring their independence from England, our forefathers made an equally strong declaration of dependence on Almighty God. The 2nd paragraph of the Declaration says: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."*

Then the closing words of the Declaration solemnly state: *"With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."* It's important that we recall this very basic declaration of their dependence on God. He's the God who gave this nation its birth and its greatness!

Listen to these words from Patrick Henry, *"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ."* What a wonderful declaration of faith!

God gave a solemn warning to another nation which was experiencing the thrill of independence after centuries of slavery in Egypt. Although it was written over 3,000 years ago, this warning could very well apply to our nation today.

Turn to Deuteronomy 8. Moses is reminding the people of Israel how God has directed and cared for them by taking them out of Egypt and guiding them into the Promised Land. Moses tells the people in verses 7-14, *"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. "Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you*

forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

These words make it abundantly clear that not only nations, but also individuals, need to pay attention to God. **Our Nation is Rapidly forgetting God!** The greatness of a nation doesn't rest in its military power, technological advancement, or its national wealth! Solomon, the wisest of men, said in Proverbs 14:34, "**Righteousness Exalts a Nation; but Sin is a Reproach to any People.**"

And isn't that what's happening in our nation today? Our modern objectives aren't about following God, but have become **Success**, wanting to get where we want to get no matter who we step on to get there! **Status**, wanting to make sure we look good to others. **Security**, our world isn't as safe as it was and that's caused us to be behind more locks, more suspicion, and more withdrawal! **Self-indulgence**, wanting what we'd like no matter what! We've abandoned moral law and then shake our heads in disbelief as things get worse!

We're sometimes asking ourselves why children seem to have no conscience, or don't seem to know right from wrong. Maybe it has a great deal to do with "*We reap what we sow.*" What a concept! God's love toward us knows no bounds, and His heart breaks as we fall away from Him and go our own way. It's called sin!

Turn to 2 Chronicles 7. **God's Desire is that we turn to Him in Prayer Confessing.** Verse 14, "*If my people who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*" God stands ready to heal our land! As His children, we need to turn to Him on our knees in prayer surrendering ourselves to Him with confidence and trust knowing He's in control of all things! People who are caught up in sin think they're free, but in reality they're enslaved to it!

The prodigal son said to his father, "*I want to be free. Give me what's mine.*" Then he wandered into the far country, saying, "*I'm free! I'm free!*" But his freedom was short-lived, his friends left him when his money ran out, and he found himself enslaved taking care of a herd of pigs. It wasn't until he came home and submitted to his father that he really found freedom.

That's the same action we need to take. James wants to make very clear we can't survive by our own power, but need to go to God! Listen to James 4:7-8, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*"

As Christians, we have a greater freedom than any Declaration can grant us. We have freedom that's offered in Jesus Christ. There's a word for freedom in the New Testament and it's, "Redemption." **Redemption means "To Be Set Free"**.

It means that we've been bought with a price and freed of our bondage to sin and death through the shed blood of Jesus Christ! We're free to live as His chosen people. We're free from the curse of death our sins deserve. Because of Jesus Christ all our sins are washed away and we stand before God white as snow!

Pray that our country might have a new birth of freedom built on God. May each one of us, as individuals, reaffirm our dependence on God and keep our focus on our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Look to Him as the one who as it says in Hebrews 12:2 is the *“founder and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Through Him and Him alone may we experience the freedom He gives not only from worry, doubt and fear, but also from all our sins! **In Him we Have True Freedom!**

Then, just like the founding Fathers of our country, we’ll find in Almighty God our life, liberty, and true happiness!